

"JESUS"

THE SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH



SHAKIR HAFIZ

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ABBREVIATIONS

BIBLE VERSIONS

EJG	The Apocrypha (Translation by E.J.Goodspeed)
GNB	The Good News Bible
KJV	King James (Authorised) Version
MET	Modern English Translation
NAB	New American Bible
NAS	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJ	New King James Version
NTC	New Testament in Contemporary Language
NWT	New World Translation
RBV	Revised Berkley Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TJB	The Jerusalem Bible
TLB	The Living Bible
URD	Common Urdu Translation
CUR	Catholic Urdu Bible
TH	The Gospel of Thomas
TOR	The Torah

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BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

(In alphabetical order of abbreviation)

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Amos	Amos
Bar	Baruch
I Chr	I Chronicles
II Chr	II Chronicles
Col	(Paul's letter to the) Colossians
I Cor	(Paul's) I (Letter to the) Corinthians
II Cor	(Paul's) II (Letter to the) Corinthians
Dan	Daniel
Deut	Deuteronomy
Ecl	Ecclesiasticus (Or, Wisdom of Sirach)
Ecs	Ecclesiastes
Eph	(Paul's letter to the) Ephesians
I Esd	I Esdras
II Esd	II Esdras
Est	Esther
Eze	Ezekiel
Ezr	Ezra
Gal	(Paul's letter to the) Galatians
Gen	Genesis

Hag	Haggai
Hbk	Habakkuk
Heb	(Letter to the) Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jas	James
Jdg	Judges
Jdt	Judith
Jere	Jeremiah
JN	John, The Gospel According to
I Jn	I (Letter of) John
II Jn	II (Letter of) John
III Jn	III (Letter of) John
Job	Job
Joe	Joel
Jon	Jonah
Josh	Joshua
I Kg	I Kings
II Kg	II Kings
Lam	Lamentations
Lev	Leviticus
LK	Luke, The Gospel According to
I Mac	I Maccabees
II Mac	II Maccabees
Mic	Micah
Mal	Malachi
MK	Mark, The Gospel According to
MT	Matthew, The Gospel According to
Nah	Nahum
Neh	Nehemiah
Num	Numbers
Oba	Obadiah
I Pet	I (Letter of) Peter
II Pet	II (Letter of) Peter
Phil	(Paul's letter to the) Phillippians
Phm	(Paul's letter to) Philemon
Prov	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
Rev	Revelations (of St. John)
Rom	(Paul's letter to the) Romans
Ruth	Ruth
I Sam	I Samuel
II Sam	II Samuel
Song	Song of Solomon
Ssg	Song of Songs
I Thess	(Paul's) I (Letter to the) Thessalonians
II Thess	(Paul's) II (Letter to the) Thessalonians
I Tim	(Paul's) I (Letter to) Timothy

II Tim	(Paul's) II (Letter to) Timothy
Tit	(Paul's letter to) Titus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom (of Solomon)
Zech	Zechariah
Zeph	Zephaniah

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OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

(B)	Blessings and peace be upon him
(P)	Peace be upon him/her
BCE	Before Christian/Common Era (commonly known as B.C.)
CE	Christian/Common Era (commonly known as A.D.)

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PREFACE

Jesus said: "you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (JN 8:32). When Pilate commented "What is truth?" (JN 18:38) the Gospels leave it unanswered!

What is truth? Is it something absolute and abstract or is it something that is a result of logic borne out of our own experience? We are born in a given environment. We learn most things as these are told to us. Most of us take these things for granted. Same is for religion. We are born into a family which may be pagan, or Muslim, or Christian, or Jew, or of some other creed and are brought up accordingly. We develop our attitudes and idiosyncracies. We get grounded into the belief that our way of life, our religion, is the best and that the others are wrong or odd even though we may have only a little knowledge of our own religion and perhaps none at all or very little about the others. This has caused considerable misunderstanding among followers of different religions.

I was born in a Muslim family. Islam, which preaches universality and progressive development of Divine Revelation, encourages its adherents to seek knowledge about other religions. The Creator has not left his creatures without guidance and over the ages has been sending Divine guidance to all the nations of the world. There must therefore be a unity in this Revelation as God would not have sent variant guidance to different people. The inquisitiveness that this attitude generates must help one to reach the final truth. Islam seems to expect that this search for truth will establish the superiority of its own Revelation contained in the Holy Quran.

Christianity, with its various sects, is presently the largest religion in the world. Its main figure, Jesus of Nazareth, is also revered by Muslims as a holy man, a prophet of God. Outside of Christian community Muslims are the only group who thus recognise Jesus. It is this interest which led me to study his life, teachings and the religion that claims to be adhering to those teachings.

In matters of faith it is difficult to be objective. I do not have any such pretence. My attempt has, however, been sincere and I have tried to study the Christian documents with as much an open mind as can be possible. In my writing I have tried to lay down my own impressions forthrightly. Faith can make us oblivious of many things in a document which may seem to be odd to a person who is a non-believer to start with. I have analysed the Bible the way I understand it. My impressions may be different from those who may have faith to ignore, or even understand, things in it which may look inconsistent to me. They will have the opportunity to read the divergent view.

I must emphasise that my analysis is limited to the contents of the Bible and the impressions I get from its reading. These do not necessarily always represent my own views. For example, Christians believe that the Bible says that Jesus was born of a virgin mother "according to the Scriptures" through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, without a human father. They also believe that Jesus died on the Cross. The impression that I seem to get is that the Biblical accounts on both those subjects are vague, doubtful, and internally inconsistent and therefore inconclusive. Whether these incidents happened in such manner or not is yet another matter. Biblical narration itself is not a sufficient basis to accept these claims. To someone who is already a believer his faith may lead him to believe all this but to a non-believer something more logical is needed to have faith or even to consider it as plausible.

The only evidence a Christian believer may be willing to consider is the Bible itself. My analysis is perforce limited to such evidence. Rarely some apocryphal evidence has been quoted only to show that there could be alternate versions from what mainstream Christians may consider as spurious, unauthentic or pseudo-Christian. Most of the Biblical quotations have been taken from the King James Version but recourse has also been made to other major versions where the alternate rendering of the text was considered more appropriate or clearer. In view of the very large number of quotations the relevant versions have not always been so indicated except where this was required for comparative purposes. Quotation of the Biblical verses does not mean endorsing or accepting the authenticity of any such verses. These are quoted only as contained in the presently-compiled versions and without prejudice or endorsement. The responsibility of proving their correctness rests on those who consider these to have been "inspired".

Beyond what is in the Bible itself, I have also included an historical survey of events and processes which led to the later spread of the myth of Jesus being God, or rather Son of God. Without such an explanation it would have looked odd as to why and how did a manifest myth become rampant to become the basis of presently the largest religion in the world. In pursuing my objective I have had access to a very large number of books and documents some of which are listed in the Bibliography at the end of this book. In case of direct quotations I have tried to identify the original source wherever possible. My effort has always been to quote or borrow ideas from better known, more authentic, Christian/Western sources. I will, however, welcome comments on any inaccuracy of facts, if any.

Being a Muslim and in keeping with the spirit of Islamic teachings I have the highest regard and reverence for all the prophets of the Almighty God who were sent to various nations in the world and consider them sinless and morally unflinching. This is also so with Jesus (Peace be upon him). In dealing with his life and teachings I have had no intention to belittle his true self or his actual teachings. My comments have been offered on the narration of his life and teachings and other events as recorded in the Bible and other Christian documents and their manifestation in prevalent Christian beliefs. Any semblance of irreverence or disrespect toward Jesus himself or any other prophet of God or Virgin Mary, is unintended and perhaps due to my own failability. May Allah in His infinite Mercy forgive me for any lapse. Amen.

Since this book is about the search for truth, the analysis would not be complete without referring to another, non-Christian, source which also presents an alternate version. I refer to the view about Jesus which is presented by the Holy Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. Because to the Christian it will be an inadmissible evidence, I have preferred to place it in an Appendix at the end of the book. If the reader feels that after reading my main analysis there is room to seek an alternate then let him ponder over it. He will find it illuminating. I have not attempted its analysis in this book. For those who may be interested in further knowledge learned commentaries are available. If I have created that interest, my humble effort will have been amply rewarded.

There is also another purpose in my attempting to write this book. Recent years have witnessed large migration of population between various countries. A large number of Muslims have left the countries of their birth and moved to Western (Christian) countries. They are constantly exposed to Christian propaganda and need to understand Christianity in its various aspects. They are also in danger of misunderstanding the present Western material glamour as a product of Christian way of life. All that glitters is not always gold and the material strength of Christianity has really been at an horrendous price in moral and ethical degradation. This

book will help to expose the real face of Christianity as depicted by its actual performance in historical perspective.

This book has been compiled specifically for information of Muslim readers and contains facts and comments which may not be palatable to the common Christian mind. In actual dialogue with them please keep the Quranic injunctions in mind:

"Reville not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance. Thus unto every nation have We made their deeds seem fair"(6:109).

"Argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say, we believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender"(29:46).

May Allah guide us all to the ultimate truth. Amen!

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a compilation of a number of books written by several different authors over a period of some 1400 years. It is divided into two distinct collections, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". Thus starts the first book of the Old Testament which in the "authorised" English translation, the famous King James Version is known as "The First Book of Moses, called Genesis". Besides this four other books Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are attributed to the authorship of Moses who lived circa 1500 B.C.E. Whether or not Moses actually wrote these books is highly doubtful and improbable. No serious scholar now makes that claim. These five books are called the Pentateuch or 'Torah'.

Like many other epics in various regions of the world such as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Bhagwad Gita of India, and Iliad, the Aeneid and Ulysses of the Greeks, the various tribes of the Israelite nation passed on to their children their folklore, legends, myths, fables, stories, songs, traditions, laws and prophetic messages from generation to generation. Most of it was an oral record. How much of it actually originated with Moses, no one really knows.

Historically the art of writing had not yet developed in the times of Moses to such an extent as to make it necessary or possible for these books to be written down. The medium of transcription in those early days were stone or wooden tablets and probably leather scrolls and perhaps papyrus scrolls. The art of writing in Hieroglyphics, even if it had sufficiently developed by then, would not have been suitable for writing large volumes of books in portable form. There is a record of the people of Israel carrying about the two sacred tablets of the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant throughout their years of wilderness and for centuries after but no where in the books of the Old Testament is there even a hint of Moses having passed on to his successors a large volume of scrolls, probably accommodated in a large room, if not several such rooms. There is no mention of such a room being in the Holy Tabernacle, the obvious place of its storage, although design of the tabernacle, its dimensions, drapes, even vessels and uniforms of the priests have been given in great details in Exodus. As is confirmed in 1 Kings 8:9 "there was nothing in the ark save the two tablets of stones which Moses put there at Horeb when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt". This was also the position at the time of Solomon when he built the Temple. After Solomon's death his kingdom was split into two parts, Israel and Judaea, which are known to have transgressed and especially Israel reverted to idol worship. Judaea too alternated between conformation and transgression until the reign of Josiah.

Whatever was revealed to Moses by way of Law could not have been very much anyway. Before Moses died he gave instructions for future conduct of the Israelites. Among these is supposed to be the one concerning the building of the altar(s): "And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set up great stones, and plaister them with plaister: And thou shalt write up on them all the words of this law....Thou shalt not lift up any iron tool over them" (Deut 27:2,3, 5). It is

possible that Moses gave some oral instructions yet whatever was in the "Law" must have been so little as to be possible to write on a stone altar which no where exists now. Was it just the Ten Commandments? If in those days writing had not yet developed, as stated above, then even this order for stone-wall writing was not even orally conveyed by Moses for he could not command these to be written when people did not know how to write.

The narrative of the life of Moses is in the third person. If Moses had been its author then the natural expression would have been "God told me, and I said to God..." rather than "God told Moses, and Moses said to God..." as in the actual narrative. The last chapter of the book of Deuteronomy records that "Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab...no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" which is clearly a posthumous narrative. [It is surprising that whereas the burial place of Abraham is said to be traceable, being in Hebron, the place of burial of Moses, the greatest leader of the Israelites is not known. Such has been the nation of Israel]. Furthermore the type of language in which the "original" manuscripts seem to have been written suggests that the Pentateuch books were written some times in the post-exilic period. Even if we may allow some of it to be later additions, there is little probability that very much of these books actually originated with Moses himself. The strongest arguments in favour of any Word of God is that it does not contain any error, God being All-Wise, All-Knowing. The books of Pentateuch contain glaring errors which are proof that these are not the revealed books, or at least what was actually revealed to Moses. (Also see the appendices).

Similarly, there is little doubt that the book of Joshua was also not written by Joshua himself but by a later author. This too contains the account of Joshua's death. Incidentally Joshua is also said to have made his own entries in the "Book of the Law of God" (Josh 24:26) but we do not know which ones. It does not exist today. We also do not know exactly when these books were compiled even orally.

"Most of the recorded events had already become immemorial traditions by the time they were finally written down. There were stories told around the campfires and in the tents of nomadic tribes, stories that were lavishly embroidered upon, transmitted by word of mouth for generations, until they were set down in writing by whoever felt inclined to do so, certainly not by their alleged original authors who were long dead by then" (Manfred Barthel: What The Bible Really Says). As is natural with oral renderings the original narratives may have been changed, added to or lost over the centuries of the Israelite history full of ups and downs, exiles and major upheavals. Some of this may have been rendered in writing at various stages but do not necessarily exist in their original form. It is estimated that the earliest compilation of this wealth of oral and some written material may have been made around 950 B.C.E. during the age of the Kings.

This first compilation too was lost in the turmoil of history. It was circa 621 B.C.E. during the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem when Hilkiah, the High Priest, "discovered" among the ruins ostensibly the "original" draft of Deuteronomy (II Kings 22:8). Whether it was actually a discovery or a new inscription need not be debated here. Prophetess Hulda promptly declared it to be "the Word of God", and this became the nucleus of the compilation that we now know as the Old Testament. Even this compilation was, however, lost during the raids by the Egyptians and especially during the period of Nebuchadnezzar (see Chapter III). It is conjectured that Ezra (circa 460 B.C.E.) wrote it down once again through inspiration:

II Esdras (14:21,22,48)

"For the law has been burned and so no one knows the things which have been done by thee. If then I have found favour before thee, send the Holy spirit into me, and I will

write everything that happened in the world from the beginning, the things which were written in the law, that men may be able to find the path and that those who wish to live in the last days may live... And I did so." Syriac manuscripts further add: "in the seventh year of the sixth week, five thousand years and three month and twelve days after creation. At that time Ezra was caught up, and taken to the place of those who are like him, after he had written all these things. And he was called the Scribe of the knowledge of the Most High for ever and ever".]

According to RSV Ethiopic, Arabic and one Aramaic manuscript have the same ending. According to the translation of the Apocrypha by Edgar J. Goodspeed the oriental versions end with this conclusion which is absent from the Latin.

The Book of Esdras is not considered canonical by certain Christian sects. However, there is other internal evidence within the canonical books themselves indicating later compilation/corruption of the "Holy Scriptures". Over the next seven centuries various books and writings were "canonized" or accepted as standard or "inspired" Holy Scriptures. This process was not completed until about 100 C.E. when a group of Jewish rabbis under the leadership of rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, mindful of the possible loss of sacred books after the Jewish revolt, met at JAMNIA to decide the final canon.

The Old Testament books (excluding Apocrypha) are grouped as under according to their subject matter:

I. THE LAW(Hebrew:Torah): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The authorship of these books is ascribed to Moses and the Jews know them as TORAH. Christians assign them the Greek name PENTATEUCH or the Five Books. These give the origin of the people of God and lay down the Law of God for these people.

II. THE PROPHECY(Hebrew:Nevi'im):

THE FORMER PROPHETS: Joshua, Judges, Samuel (I & II) and Kings (I & II).

THE LATER PROPHETS: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the TWELVE (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi).

III. THE WRITINGS(Hebrew:Ketuvim): Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles (I & II).

THE SEPTUAGINT (LXX)

Most of the ancient documents were in Hebrew with a few in Aramaic. With the spread of Greek as the language of fashion, learning and knowledge, there was a demand for an authentic Greek version for the Jews in Diaspora (or, "in dispersion" in foreign lands). Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) not himself a Jew but a patron of knowledge, assigned the task of translation to seventy two eminent learned rabbis. This version of the Old Testament is known as The Septuagint, meaning "seventy" on account of the seventy / seventy-two translators.

The story of this extraordinary venture is given in some detail in "Letter of Aristeas" (Forgotten Books of Eden). It so happened that Ptolemy Philadelphus was a great bibliophile and wanted to have copies of all great classical works in his library at Alexandria. He ordered his minister Demetrius to draw up the plan for transcription. The following excerpts from this Letter shed light on this venture:

"The following is a copy of the memorial. The Memory of Demetrius to the great king. 'Since you have given me instruction, O king, that the books which are needed to complete your library should be collected together, and that those which are defective should be repaired, I have devoted myself with the utmost care to the fulfilment of your wishes, and I now have the following proposal to lay before you.

The books of the law of the Jews (with some few others) are absent from the library. They are written in the Hebrew characters and language and have been carelessly interpreted, and do not represent the original text as I am informed by those who know; for they have never had a king's care to protect them.

It is necessary that these should be made accurate for your library since the law which they contain, inasmuch as it is of divine origin, is full of wisdom and free from all blemish.

For this reason literary men and poets and the mass of historical writers have held aloof from referring to these books and the men who have lived and are living in accordance with them, because their conception of life is so sacred and religious, as Hecataeus of Abdera says.

If it please you, O king, a letter shall be written to the High Priest in Jerusalem, asking him to send six elders out of every tribe, men who have lived the noblest life and are most skilled in their law, that we may find out the points in which the majority of them are in agreement, and so having obtained an accurate translation may place it in a conspicuous place in a manner worthy of the work itself and your purpose.

May continual prosperity be yours".

When this memorial had been presented, the king ordered a letter to be written to Eleazar, the High Priest, on the matter, giving also an account of the emancipation of the Jewish captives numbering about one hundred thousand in return for this favour. The High Priest Eleazar agreed to the request and six highly learned people from each of the twelve tribes of Israel were selected and commissioned to undertake the compilation and translation of what we now know of as "Septuagint" meaning 70 on account of seventy/seventy-two translators. It is stated that each of these translators did his own translation individually by himself in seclusion and through a miracle each of these was found to be the same word for word. The king in return freed one hundred thousand Jewish captives as promised. Thus, incidentally, makes the Septuagint the costliest book of all times. However, according to some early tradition it took about 100 years between 3rd and 4th centuries B. C.E to translate and inscribe the whole work.

It may be mentioned that Septuagint was not the only Greek translation available at that time, but it was the most accepted one among the Greek speaking Jews. In fact Origen (3rd century C.E.) compiled a collection called Hexpla in which the first column contained the Hebrew text followed by a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek followed by Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, the Septuagint, and Neodation. For the book of Psalms he added three other Greek translations including one that Origen had discovered from a jar found in Jericho area where in modern times the Dead Sea scrolls have been discovered.

The Jews were, however, not generally inclined to Hellenization of their customs and practices. The festidious and pious among them disliked such encroachments and insisted on reading their manuscripts in the Hebrew language held holy by them.

"The Jews say that darkness was upon the face of the Earth in the time of Ptolomy, when that translation was made, & kept a Fast yearly in the month Thabath, to testify their sorrow & resentments for it. And tho the Hellenists did reside in Judea, or resort thither from

Alexandria, Antioch, & other places, yet they held Synagogues distinct from those of the Hebrews; thus we have the Synagogue of the Libertines, of the Cyrenians, Alexandrians, etc. (Acts vi. 9). Such were the Jewish Synagogues, of which Justin Martyr & Tertullian speak, in which the Septuagint was read; such was that in Cesarea, the Metropolis of Judea, whereof we read in the Hierosolymitan Talmud that R. Levi went to Cesarea, & hearing them reading the lesson in Greek he would have hinder'd them, but R. Jose was angry, & said, Must not he read at all who cannot read Hebrew; let him read in any language that he understands, and he discharged his duty" (Joseph Stubb: Rise and Progress of Mahometanism, pp. 16)

THE APOCRYPHA

Although the Septuagint was generally read by the Jews of the Diaspora it did not have the canonical authority. During the time of Jesus the only books that were respected as sacred were "The Law and the Prophets". Even though Jesus and his contemporaries often quoted from the Writings, these books were not canonized until 100 C.E. at Jamnia. Since the Jews do not accept any "New Testament", they do not recognise the title "Old Testament" but call it "TANACH". However, the new canon excluded 15 books or parts thereof which had been included in the Septuagint. The rabbis assembled at Jamnia did not approve of these books. These are known as the Apocrypha, or "the hidden books".

Since the early church under Paul's doctrines was based mainly in Greek-influenced areas, the Old Testament used by the early Christians was the Septuagint. It is partly for this reason that the Jews discredited the Apocrypha. The famous Vulgate Bible in Latin, edited by St. Jerome circa 400 C.E. includes the Apocrypha even though St. Jerome did point out the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek versions. For 1500 years Apocrypha remained a part of the authorized Bibles for Western Europe. The first Bible reproduced through printing, The Gutenberg Bible, is a copy of the Vulgate and includes the Apocrypha.

In 1534 C.E. Martin Luther separated the Apocryphal books and printed these after what is now the Protestant version of the Old Testament. This practice was followed in the King James Version of 1611 C.E. In 1827 C.E. the British and the American Bible Societies decided to drop these books entirely out of the Protestant versions. Thus once again the human logic (or illogic) decided what is divinely inspired and what is not.

The Councils of African Churches at Hippo (393 C.E) and Carthage (397, 419 C.E) accepted the Apocryphal books as canon. The Roman Catholic church affirmed its acceptance of Apocrypha at the Council of Trent (1546 C.E). At the Synod of Jerusalem the Greek church accepted that some of the Apocryphal books could be inspired. Russian Orthodox church excludes Apocrypha from the "Holy Scriptures". Martin Luther considered that while the Apocrypha was not equal to the sacred Scriptures, "they were edifying" anyway. Protestant churches do not accept Apocrypha as sacred. The Jews totally reject these books. The Hebrew Scriptures differ from the Greek Scriptures mainly with regard to Apocrypha. Although the Greek Scriptures are stated to have been with the Jews of Alexandria "it is possible that the additions to the Hebrew scriptures in the Greek Bible are of Christian origin" (Enc. Britn, 15th Ed., 1981).

Today, while the Jews and the Protestants do not accept the authenticity of the Apocrypha, Catholics and some others consider it an important part of the Old Testament. The Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Anglican church, while presiding at the coronation of King Edward VII, refused to use a copy of the Bible without Apocrypha, considering it "mutilated and imperfect".

The Common Protestant Old Testament thus consists of 39 books excluding the Apocrypha whereas the Catholic Bible contains 46 books with the following books or parts of books in addition to the Common Protestant Bible:

- The Book of Tobit
- The Book of Judith
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach
- The Book of Baruch
- The Additions to Daniel
 - The prayer of Azeriah and the story of Susanna
 - The story of Bel and the Dragon
- The Addition to II Chronicles
- The Prayer of Manasseh
- The First Book of Maccabees
- The Second Book of Maccabees
- The Additions to The Book of Esther

It is interesting that while the two books of Esdras (I Esdra and II Esdra) are included in Apocrypha and are included by NEB and RSV in a section separate from Old and New Testament, and also included in the EJC translation, these are not included in the Catholic bibles (CUR, NAB, TJB, URD) which incidentally place all the other apocryphal books and fragments in their original position. It may also be noted that in the original Septuagint the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, were called I and II Esdras respectively in which case the present I and II Esdras are numbered as III and IV Esdras.

THE AUTHORS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

According to the information supplied to the author by the Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California, U.S.A., the authorship of various books of the Old Testament is as follows :

"The first five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy, were written by Moses during the 40 years of wandering. Joshua is the logical author of the book of Joshua. Judges was written by the prophet Samuel, according to Jewish tradition. Samuel also wrote I Sam 1-24 and I Sam. 10:25; 25:1. The remainder of I Samuel and all of II Samuel was written by Nathan the prophet and Gad (I Chr. 29:29). I and II Kings were probably written by Jeremiah, compiling older records made by prophets contemporary with the events. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all prophets of God who wrote the books bearing their names.

The Psalms had various authors: David wrote about half of them; other authors include Asaph or his descendants, the sons of Korah, and Moses. Proverbs 1 through 29 belong mostly to Solomon. Chapters 30 and 31 are respectively ascribed to Agur and Lemuel.

The author of the book of Job is not definite, though it was most likely Job himself. The Song of Solomon was written by Solomon. Jewish tradition attributes the book of Ruth to Samuel. Lamentations was undoubtedly written by Jeremiah. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon. Esther was probably written by Mordecai. Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah wrote the books which bear their names. I and II Chronicles were written by Ezra."

It is worth noting in the above-quoted letter such words as "according to Jewish tradition," "probably", "ascribed to", "not definite", etc., which clearly indicate grave doubts about the authors and one is constrained to ask how then do we know whether the authors were "inspired" since we do not know about the real authors or their credentials!

As we have pointed out earlier it is most doubtful that Moses wrote the Pentateuch books, at least in the shape as they are now in the Bible. Similarly the authorship of other books is very much ambiguous. Even in such a short book as Amos, for instance, there are evidences of more than one author. Amos himself lived around 750 B.C.E. yet the book of Amos contains narratives of the fall of the royal dynasty of David and of the Babylonian exile — events that actually occurred a century and a half after Amos lived! It is clearly the work of an unknown later author.

The following information about the books of the Old Testament given by William MacDonald (Summary of the Bible, Emmaus Correspondence School) is also illuminating:

BIBLE: "Its contents have been divinely selected [how this divine authority was exercised is not known — Author].

I & II Chronicles: "David's sin is largely passed over".

Psalms: "The authors of 50... are unknown.. Many psalms are clearly prophetic in that they describe the coming of Christ" [Interpretation after the event! — Author].

Proverbs: "... for the most part by King Solomon".

Ecclesiastes: "Solomon is generally considered to be the author".

Jonah: "It is believed that Jonah prophesied to Israel during the reigns of exact dates are not known".

Nahum: "The exact date of Nahum's prophecy is unknown".

Habakkuk: "Some times before Babylonian captivity, probably during the reign of Josiah".

Malachi: "probably active during the closing part of Nehemiah's governorship".

Thus, we can see that for the most part we are unaware or uncertain as to who wrote various books of the Old Testament. Just one example: There never was a prophet named Malachi! The name Malachi ("my messenger") was a pseudonym chosen by some ancient unknown writer of the book of Malachi.

The oral conveyance of the various books necessarily lead to variations and corruptions. Several efforts were apparently made in reconciling these differences and these are evident in overlappings, repetitions, inconsistencies and ambiguities in Biblical narrations. Today the scholars recognise at least four original sources:

1. The YAHVIST Version written possibly in the Ninth Century B.C.E. in Judah or Judaea.
2. The ELOHIST Version written sometime later in Israel.
3. DEUTERONOMY: some place its writing in the Eighth Century B.C.E. and others think it was written in the time of Josiah.
4. The SACERDOTAL Version may have been written during the exilic period or soon after the exile and possibly Sixth Century B.C.E.

Besides, there may be individual insertions from time to time. At some stage efforts were made to reconcile the differences between different versions and in this effort various renditions were brought together skillfully. Sometimes more than one sources were juxtaposed and sometimes stories were adopted for the sake of synthesis. Thus each book is a jigsaw puzzle of various literary styles.

Such attempts at conciliation and reconciliations have resulted in, for example, two distinctly different stories of Creation—Genesis 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–3:2. Another such example is Genesis 37 wherein Joseph is sold to Ishmaelites in verse 27 and to the Midianite traders in verse 28. Ten Commandments are given in two versions: Exodus (2:1-21) and Deuteronomy (5:1-30). They are in the same spirit, but variations are obvious.

That it does not retain its original character is indicated by the following quotations from various introductions and footnotes in the New American Bible (Catholic Edition): "... the result of a careful and complex joining of several historical traditions or sources .. The fact is that each of these individual traditions incorporates much older material..... before they were brought together.... It is true we do not conceive of him [Moses] as the author of the books in the modern sense". Genesis: The book is a complex work, not be attributed to a single original author.... Verse 3.20 seems to be out of place.... V 6:1-4 is apparently a fragment of an old legend that had borrowed much from ancient mythology. [Also see Appendix I]

The following extracts from "Twentieth Century Bible Commentary" (C. Henton Davies, et.el. ed.) will be further illuminating:

"GENESIS: The book falls into five divisions:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Myths or Parables of Origin | Ch. 1-11 |
| 2. The Story of Abraham | Ch. 12-25.9 |
| 3. The Story of Isaac | Ch. 26 |
| 4. The Story of Jacob | Ch. 25.9-34, 27-36 |
| 5. The Novel of Joseph | Ch. 37-50 |

Genesis is really a mosaic of material gathered into two or three complexes of tradition which later became the written documents J, E and P, into which the present Heb. text of Genesis may be divided. Some scholars have found evidence of composite material in J described variously as J, or L (Lay), or S (South or Seir) source; others have divided P into two main priestly sources. There is an increasing tendency to deny the existence of E as a separate source, and some European scholars have denied the J E P analysis, claiming that Gen.-Num. is the P book which has grown up after a long history of oral tradition and fixation. Certainly it is no longer possible to think of J E D P as fixed points along a date line, emerging at say 850, 750, 621, and 398, respectively. Rather each symbol identifies streams of material both ancient and modern, flowing through and draining Israel's story and faith in Palestine, Egypt, Sinai and again in Palestine, to emerge eventually as the southern (J), northern (E) and Priestly (P) documents.

The material includes myths, stories of the purpose and activity of God, legends, the sacred stories of Israel's forebears and sanctuaries, the sagas, 'secular' stories of ancient heroes and various poems. The Priestly material also preserves various legislative narratives and shows a special interest in 'the generations of' words which are applied to the heavens and the earth, Adam, Noah ... Shem ... Terah ... Jacob ... Moses and Aaron ... an interest which reveals his faith. J is a prince among story tellers who fashioned Canaanite and Israelite material into an epic of Israel's early history. P is a cultic theologian who viewed life as a whole and claimed through his stories of creation and of sanctuaries that the earth is the LORD'S, through the festivals that the days and the seasons are his, through the sacrifices that all things and all life are the LORD'S.

It is no longer possible to regard Moses as the author of Genesis, but instead there is given to us the rich and diverse revelations through these other nameless personalities. All that was ever of worth concerning Moses still speaks to us out of the Book of Exodus, but the portrait gallery of God's servants is wondrously enriched by the works of J, E and P.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Because the material from various sources/authors had to be reconciled into one narrative there are obvious blanks, overlaps, contradictions, etc. Story of Joseph as contained within the book of Genesis is a typical example.. Comments from TCBC continue!

"Ch. 37. Joseph sold into Egypt. The narrative is composite, and may be substantially divided as follows: to J belongs 2b-4, 12-18, 21, 25b-27, 28b, 31-35; to E belong 5-11, 19-20, 22-25a, 28a 30, 36, to P belong 1-2a. On the basis of this analysis the two stories which vary in detail may be worked out. The salient points are: J: Israel, Joseph the tale-bearer E: Jacob, Joseph's dream rescue by Midianites. Common to both stories are: the brethren's resentment, and dislike, the coat of many colours, ...

V. 21. 'Reuben' read 'Judah'. In J the friendly brother is Judah. The mistake may be due to a copyist.

Ch. 38 (J). The story crude and displeasing to modern Christian ears, represents tribal history and explains Canaanitish elements which existed among the clans of which Judah, one of the largest tribes, was constituted.

Ch. 39. (J) ... Ch 40 (E)

Ch. 41. With the exception of V 46 (P) the chapter is assigned to E.

Ch. 42 is from E Verses 27, 28 and 38 being from J

Ch. 43 is from J with the exception of V.14 (E) and V. 23b (from a later redactor or copyist)".

NUMBERS: Like Genesis, Exodus and Joshua, the Book of Numbers is compiled from three sources: J, E and P. Less than one-quarter of the book comes from J and E. The P matter belongs to several periods ... There are also interesting elements in the book which are more ancient than J, E.

JUDGES: The book is certainly compiled from a number of sources, but the discrimination of these sources must remain speculative.

RUTH: The Book of Ruth is a short story, a work of fiction.

ESTHER: A historical novel... It was written in order to supply Jewish origin and justification for the Feast of Purim ... a heathen feast as foreign as the word 'pur', taken over by the Jews and given an Israelite dress ... Everyone knows that this is a book of the Bible in which the name of God is not mentioned, although divine providence is in the mind ... The gripping interest of Esther as a story should not be allowed to conceal its unsuitability (except negatively) for Christian nurture and life. Luther wished it had never been written!

JOB: Widely differing dates for the composition of Job have been suggested by scholars.

PROVERBS: Nothing is known of the authors of the collections or of separate maxims. The ascription of the whole book (in the title) and of two groups of sayings within it to Solomon is, of course, traditional and unhistorical.

ECCLESIASTES: It is difficult to discover in Ecclesiastes anything that can appropriately be called 'religious teaching'.

THE SONG OF SONGS: ... quite out of place in a collection of religious literature.

ISAIAH: The Book of Isaiah is not a unity belonging to one date or written by one hand.

LAMENTATIONS: ... not written by Jeremiah.

DANIEL: The book is written as though it were made up of a series of adventures and visions which came to Daniel (and his friends) in the sixth century B.C., but scholars are generally agreed that it belongs in its present form to ... [the period of the Antiochean 'abomination of desolation' i.e. the era just prior to the Maccabean revolt]. What is represented as 'vision' is not genuine prediction of future events but past history written up in the future tense. .. We have no direct information about the author.

HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, MALACHI, JONAH, OBADIAH, JOEL, DEUTERO-ZECHARIAH: ... anonymous exilic prophet, commonly called Deutero-Isaiah ... The wild, often ecstatic prophet, who by his uninhibited tongue might at any time precipitate a further, indeed a final, catastrophe, was felt by many to be a physician whose cures might prove too violent and kill. Lastly, we must not forget that prophecy had been for many people discredited. Deutero-Isaiah had promised so much and it had not happened. Haggai and Zechariah also made promises and they, too, were falsified by events. Many of the finer Jewish spirits turned from prophecy in disillusionment more than tinged with disgust".

It is noteworthy that the "disillusionment" with prophecy may be a major reason why the Jewish rabbis who canonized their Tanac (Christian: "Old Testament") in Jamnia in around 100 C.E. did not approve any religious material from the post-"minor prophets" era although it was part of the Septuagint (LXX) and remains part of the Catholic Bible known as Apocrypha to the Protestant churches. Again, many of the so-called prophecies about appearance of a "saviour" belong to this "minor prophets" era about which the Jews were now obviously disillusioned in the post-Jewish Revolt era. Their suspicion about Jesus being not a Messiah must have now been confirmed as he did not perform according to their (misplaced?) expectation. Thus they threw out these (false?) documents. It seems the "prophecy" ended with the last document of Tanac ("Old Testament").

Since the Christian Church was nurtured in an environment of Greek cultural influence for it Septuagint was the compilation to be followed. And it remained so for sixteen centuries until the Protestant Church according to its own whims and wisdom decided to do away with the Apocrypha.

CANONIZATION OF THE "HOLY SCRIPTURES"

How this medley of books by mostly unknown authors became a collection of "holy" books is explained in the following quotation from the "Twentieth Century Bible Commentary (op. cit.):

"..... First, the law of Moses was defined and fixed and remained primary and normative for Jewish faith and practice. So much was this the uncontested foundation of all else that even the schismatic Samaritan community (ca. 300 B.C.) acknowledged it as their sole Scripture. The Chronicler also, writing about 300 B.C., exhibits a deep respect for both the Pentateuch and the historical books which he uses as sources for his great historical work. Then some time in the third century B.C. the Pentateuch was translated into Gr., and thus the first part of the Gr. version of the Bible known as the Septuagint (LXX) was prepared in Alexandria. All this suggests the primacy and fixedness of the law well before 200 B.C.

The idea of a canon of Scripture, that is, of books revealed to men by God and regulative of the belief and conduct of the faithful, is one which was understood in Ben Sira's day, although the word canon was first used in this sense by the Christian fathers of the fourth century A.D. The beginnings of the idea lie much further back in the conviction that God speaks in a number of different ways to men. He speaks Torah, that is, 'instruction' or 'law' through his priests, the 'word' through his prophets, the 'song' through the poets and the 'proverb' through

the wise. But always the foundation of Israel's religion was the law and the heart of the law the decalogue or Ten Words which, according to tradition, were either dictated or written by Yahweh himself. They were "written with the finger of God" (Ex. 31,18). "The writing was the writing of God" (Ex. 32,16), and no one shall add or diminish from them (Deut. 4,2).

Looking back after the event, we can see how inevitable it was that the collected law of Israel should eventually be publicly acknowledged as divinely given and binding upon Israel. A decisive step was taken in the year 621 when the Book of Deuteronomy was accidentally discovered during repairs of the Temple, pronounced authoritative by a prophetess and publicly accepted by king and people in a solemn covenant ceremony (II Kings 23,3). The principle was now irrevocably established that Israel's constitution was given by God in written form. Israel became the people of a book. It is not altogether misleading to call Deut., from this point of view, 'the fundamental document of Judaism'.

It was therefore in line with the inner impulses of the Jewish church-nation that, when Ezra returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, probably in the year 397, with the law of God in his hand, he should seek Israel's assent to the law in an impressive public ceremony (Neh. 8, 9), followed by the enactment of a covenant. Whether the law published by Ezra was the whole Pentateuch or 'P' or simply its legal parts, the formation of the canon of the law was now all but completed. It was certainly complete, fixed and unalterable by the time that Jesus ben Sira wrote Ecclesiasticus. During the centuries between Deut and Ben Sira, the various traditions (JEDHP) which we sometimes try to separate out within the Pentateuch were woven together into the impressive unity which they now present.

Secondly, for a Jew living about 200 B.C., the prophetic canon was in the main fixed. Obviously prophetic traditions were more subject to modification and expansion than the legal, as the study of the various books shows. But the tradition had been tending to become more limited since the prophetic ministry of Second Isaiah (sixth century). The habit had been growing of looking back to the classical period of prophecy, and by the third and second centuries a nostalgic admission was voiced that prophetic inspiration had disappeared from Israel. In a late psalm it is said:

'We see not our signs:

There is no more any prophet;

Neither is there among us any that

knoweth how long' (Ps. 74,9).

In I Mac. 4,46 it is recorded how a decision about the polluted Jerusalem altar was postponed for lack of a prophet to give divine guidance about it. The failure of prophetic originality is also illustrated by a new approach to earlier predictions which seemed unfulfilled. These might be reinterpreted so that they might still be deemed open and relevant to a new generation. In this way the author of Daniel (9,2) handled the famous prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the duration of the exile. All in all, we see the growing reverence of Jewish scholars and writers for a body of prophecy which is fixed and given, that is virtually canonical. Only Ezekiel, whom Ben Sira knew and counted among the prophets (Ecclus. 49,8), had still to struggle for recognition.

Thirdly, in the time of Ben Sira's grandson the third part of the canon was still open and fluid. This is shown by the indefiniteness of his descriptive terms. Within the few lines of his preface he speaks of the law and the prophets and the others that have followed in their steps', but again of 'the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers' and yet again of 'the law itself and the prophecies and the rest of the books'. Of course, many of the books (like Canticles) and much of the Wisdom (like Job and Proverbs) do not make any claim for

direct divine inspiration, although the association of these books with great archetypal figures of the past tends to imply this. Moreover, since much of this literature, despite some cult and folk-memory origins, was comparatively recent, there could be no consciousness on the part of Ben Sira of any decisive break between it and his own work. Ben Sira's grandson therefore speaks generally of 'the other books of our fathers'. The phrase suggests the beginning of a tendency to group these 'other books' with the accepted, sacred scriptures. But it was only a beginning, and the limits of this section of the Bible were not settled by the Jews until A.D. 100, while Christian judgement is still divided.

The 'writings' and the Apocrypha: The question raised by the Apocrypha, therefore, is this. Does it as a whole or in part belong to the third section of the canon, the writings? Or is it to be kept quite separately and valued in a different way? There were two classical answers to this question, the one given by the Jews of Palestine and the other by the Jews, and afterwards the Christians, of Egypt.

i. The Palestinian canon. In this tradition, as already understood by the Jewish historian Josephus (first century A.D.), there are twenty-two holy books, that is, the five books of Moses, thirteen prophetic books including the historical books, and four hymns to God (Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes). The instinct of the Jewish Church was to draw the limit of inspiration at the work of Ezra and indeed to make Ezra responsible for defining the whole canon (see II Esdras 14.19-48). Josephus wrote: 'It is true our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time'. This principle of selection was accepted as determinative by the synod of Jamnia A.D. 100, when the Jews decided finally to limit their Scriptures to twenty-four books, confronted as they were with the allurements of apocalyptic syncretism and the ever-growing Christian Church. The title 'writings' for the third part of the canon may indicate that it was not so read. The books contained in the Heb. canon were those of our O.T., though not in the same order. The books we now call the Apocrypha were firmly outside the range of books 'that defile the hands' or 'the holy books' as the rabbis described Scripture.

ii. The Alexandrian canon. On the other hand, the Jews of Egypt acted independently. The law's primacy was there even more marked, for the reason that neither the prophets nor the writings were deemed to have comparable canonical authority. The result was that in Alexandria 'the rest of the books' bore little relation to the third part of the Palestinian canon; no limit was imposed, there was no fixed number of them. They were arranged according to a different principle and handed down in a different order, first the historical books dealing with the past, then the poetical and didactic works edifying for the present, and finally the books which looked to the future. Books of the Apocrypha were included in one or other of these sections according to their content and type. Different MSS. of the LXX incorporate varying selections of the apocryphal books.

These two ways of regarding the Apocrypha have each played a part in the Church's approach to her sacred scriptures. The Church, of course, used the LXX (Gr. Bible) which included the bible foundations. They inevitably seized on the Heb. canon although they continued to use the arrangement of books long familiar from the LXX (Gr.) and the Vulg. (Lat.) Luther followed St. Jerome in excluding the Apocrypha from the authoritative canon, while keeping it in his Bible for edification. He prefaced it with the explanation: 'Apocrypha, that is books which cannot be reckoned with the canonical books of Holy Scripture, but nevertheless are good and useful to be read.' The Lutheran and Zurich Reformed churches accepted his position, as did Miles Coverdale whose translation of 1535 included I and II Esdras which

Luther had omitted. Calvin, however, took a more rigorous line and excluded the Apocrypha altogether. The Calvinistic and most Protestant churches have followed him. The Church of England cautiously avoided the policy of proscription and in its sixth Article expressed itself explicitly in the spirit of St. Jerome. 'The other books (as Jerome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.' This has not prevented the existence of a certain prejudice against the Apocrypha so that it is not as familiarly known as it ought to be.

This, then, is the sum of the matter. The Apocrypha is a group of books valued by Alexandrian Jewry and the Christian Church. Its bid for a place in the canon had varying fortune. It was included in the Gr. and Latin Bibles but excluded from the Heb. canon. Most of our Bibles follow the Heb. canon in excluding the Apocrypha, but the Alexandrian canon in arranging the books."

This description of the canonization process by noted Christian scholars themselves leaves no doubt about haphazard collection/selection of the books of the anthology we are now told to recognise as the "Old Testament"!

For the most part the Old Testament remains a narrow, ultra-nationalistic folklore literature where God is only the God of His Chosen People, the Israelites, and is committed to the welfare and glory of only these people. If he is benevolent to other nations it is only because he is unhappy with his chosen people.

In giving any credence to the books included in the Old Testament we must first give credence to the mostly unknown authors, their motives, and their inspiration. Similar credence must of necessity be accorded to the later conciliators and editors. This needs a strong, uncritical and blind faith to start with. Leaving such considerations aside, if we were to select a number of books out of a larger number, what criteria do we need to apply to determine whether a certain book was in fact divinely "inspired" and therefore needed to be included while another, of similar nature or perhaps having a better claim, be excluded?

BASIS OF CANON

The problem of canonization and especially the Apocrypha also raises an important question: What after all is the criteria for acceptance or rejection of a document as canonical? How do we know which document is "inspired" and which is not? In fact what is canon and what is not has always been a problem within the Christian churches and between the Jews and the Christians. The earliest extant Hebrew Codex is the "Cairo Prophet", circa 895 C.E. One next in line is the "Leningrad prophets," circa 916 C.E. No prior copies are available. The earliest available fragment from Qumran (Dead Sea) scrolls do not contain any fragment from the book of Esther while there are some fragments from some Apocryphal and even extra-canonical books. The Great Psalms Scroll is different from the present book of Psalms both in contents and sequence. The Syrian East Hebrew canon included some of the books of Apocrypha but excluded Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. The Syriac Peshitta (Codex Ambrosianus) includes III and IV Maccabees and sometimes IV Esdras as well as, strangely, 'Josephas' "Wars", volume VII. There are differences of opinion among the Jews themselves about the canonical status of Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastics and Esther. Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch; other books, obviously compiled after the schism, are, therefore, not acceptable to them. Ben Sirach, Philo and Josephas speak of "other books" with regard to the Ketuvim. Jesus himself speaks of "the Law and the Prophets" (24 books) though he is said to have quoted from Psalms and Proverbs. Origen considered the Old Testament to consist of only 22 books; so does Josephas. Some scholars consider the books of Esther and Jonah as of fictionary

nature. Whatever their merit or demerit, the books of Apocrypha provide an interesting interlude for the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In order to understand the process of canonisation we must also try to understand the historical process behind it. Apparently Moses did leave a legacy of "The Law" which was carried by oral tradition from one generation to the next. As the art of writing became prevalent several written renderings may have been available. All these renderings were lost as has been asserted by Ezra already quoted earlier in this chapter. The Torah or the Pentateuch must have been the first to be recognised as "holy" because of its association with Moses. Other books were written in the meantime some of which became more popular than others. Most of this religious literature was in Hebrew. However, from the time of Ezra it was traditional to have oral rendering of the Hebrew text in local languages and dialects. This practice caused learned "Targums" or translations/paraphrase especially in Aramaic. The translation of Torah into Greek took place probably during the reign of Ptolemy II (285 - 247 B.C.). This was done as part of the effort to compile a library of Hebrew literature what we now know as the Septuagint. This collection was merely an anthology and did not necessarily have any religious sanction behind it although many of the writings especially those attributed to various "prophets" were considered "sacred". As already noted earlier these were sub-grouped as Torah, Nebi'im (Prophets) and the Ketuvim (Writings). Apparently this was due to their association with the status of the authors themselves. These books, however, were not free of corruption or misinterpretation and misrepresentation over Israel's history with all of its upheavals.

"The recognition of a book as "sacred" depended upon its acceptability by different schools of thought. In later years the main controversy was between the famous schools of Hillel and Shammai over the position of Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. This controversy was resolved at the Council of Jamnia (circa C.E.100) where these two books as supported by Hillel were accepted as sacred. The matter of canon was still a point of debate in the second and third century C.E. There was no definite time, then, when a deliberate collection was made of books called "Canonical". Rather, by their contribution to the record of divine revelation and by their popularity and use in synagogue worship they gradually won for themselves an established position within the body of sacred Scripture" (D.S. Russele; Between the Testaments, pp. 62).

Thus we observe that whereas Jewish literature had been translated into Greek and compiled in the form of Septuagint, it had in fact no religious authority. While the Jews compiled their own Hebrew collection at Jamnia the Christian Church having its roots in Greek culture adhered to the Septuagint. The Jews developed some sort of criteria to determine the acceptance or rejection of any book:

- i) That the prophecy had ceased from Israel after Daniel in the Persian period, and that, therefore, all books written after that time could not be considered.
- ii) The congruity of the contents of any books with the Torah.
- iii) A certain self-consistency within the books concerned.
- iv) The original Hebrew character of any book.

The Council of Jamnia particularly rejected the books like Ecclesiasticus (or Ben Sira), Judith, Psalms of Solomon, and 1 & 2 Maccabees mainly because of the antipathy of the Rabbis who remembered the part played by such books in fanning the flames of revolt which led to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Another cause was Christian acceptance and use of these books particularly with respect to the Messiah. The use of such books was therefore discontinued in the Jewish synagogues. The early Christian Church adopted the Septuagint although controversies continued, and still continue, as to which books are not authentic sacred writings.

The Protestant churches took a definite stand to exclude the books of Apocrypha from the Old Testament Canon.

The following is the view of a Christian scholar Edgar J. Goodspeed on the authoritativeness of the Old Testament: "The history of the establishment of the canon of the Old Testament, which is to say, the decision whether or not a given book is inspired, is full of uncertainties....".

Thus, the sacred Holy Scripture is a compilation of human writings, mostly not intended to be so by the writers themselves but selected to be so by human decisions, the criteria of which we are not aware of. This in fact has been a cause of dissension within the various Christian churches all through the ages. It remains so today.

THE NEW TESTAMENT:

The story of Jesus' life and crucifixion is contained in the four Gospels which are included in the New Testament. During his own lifetime Jesus remained attached to his ancestral religion, Judaism. For a long time, until Paul's doctrines took over, Jesus' original disciples and his own Apostles and their followers were "preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts 11:19) even in the Gentile lands. Christianity in fact started as an offshoot of Judaism. The early Christians retained the Old Testament only naturally and in their early days they were meeting even within the Jewish synagogues (LK 24:53) until they were no more acceptable. In their assemblies and later churches the Christians kept on using the Old Testament scriptures since they had none of their own.

Meanwhile, Paul was spreading his own brand of Christianity distinctly different from that of Jesus' own disciples. During his many journeys Paul established churches of his own followers and maintained constant contacts through personal letters or "EPISTLES", and through emissaries. In his epistles he conveyed his directions and views on various religious matters. He probably never realized that one day his epistles would themselves be considered as Holy Scriptures. His followers were using the Old Testament scriptures for reading in their churches. In his Letter to Timothy when he was instructing him to "devote your attention to the public reading of the Scripture" (I Tim 4:13) he was obviously referring to the Jewish Holy Scriptures as none of the books in the New Testament had yet been written.

Soon there was demand for readings about life and teachings of Jesus. Many "gospels" or Good News about Jesus Christ were written and were being used in various church centres along with the interpretation of faith as expounded by Paul as well as others. The fact that a number of such accounts were available is indicated in the beginning lines of the Gospel according to Luke (1:1-2): "Many people have done their best to write a report of the things that have taken place among us. They wrote what we have been told by those who saw these things from the beginning and who proclaimed the message". All these accounts were written not for the purposes of history but were rather prompted with a deep concern of faith. As someone aptly stated "the evangelists were writing with their feet on the ground of history and their heads in the clouds of faith".

Thus within the first century C.E. a large number of gospels and other documents were in circulation. These were either life stories or compilation of sayings of Jesus. According to Bishop Papias (C 60-130 C.E) a compilation of 'Sayings' by Matthew existed in his times. There are left-over pieces from manuscripts, or just mention of the names of certain books in some available manuscripts, of such books as 'An Apocalypse of Paul', 'Secret Book of James', 'Gospel of Thomas', 'Gospel of the Birth of Mary', 'Gospel of Nicodemus', 'Gospel of the Hebrews', 'Gospel of the Ebionites', 'The General Epistle of Barnabas', etc. Some of these are available in

our own times while most others are extinct. These pious documents were, however, in circulation in different churches and sometimes read alongwith one or more of the present canonical gospels. It will be interesting to understand how they were being received by the early church. The following comments are taken from the book "The Lost Books of the Bible":

The Gospel of the Birth of Mary: "The ancient copies differed from Jerome's, for from one of them the learned Eusebius, a native of Britain, who became Bishop of Riez, in Provence, endeavoured to prove that Christ was not the Son of God till after his baptism; and that he was not of the house of David and tribe of Juda, because, according to the Gospel he cited, the Virgin herself was not of this tribe, but of the tribe of Levi; her father being a priest of the name of Joachim.

The General Epistle of Barnabas: Barnabas was a companion and fellow-preacher with Paul. This Epistle lays a greater claim to canonical authority than most others. It has been cited by Clements, Alexandrinus, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, and many ancient Fathers. Cotelierus affirms that Origen and Jerome esteemed it genuine and canonical; but Cotelierus himself did not believe it to be either one or the other. On the contrary, he supposes it was written for the benefit of the Ebionites (the Christianized Jews,) who were tenacious of rites and ceremonies. Bishop Fell feared to own expressly what he seemed to be persuaded of, that it ought to be treated with the same respect as several of the books of the present canon. Dr. Bernard, Savilian professor at Oxford, not only believed it to be genuine, but that it was read throughout the churches at Alexandria, as the canonical scriptures were. Dodwell supposed it to have been published before the Epistle of Jude, and the writings of both the Johns, Vossius, Dupuis, Dr. Cane, Dr. Mill, Dr. S. Clark, Whiston, and Archbishop Wake also esteemed it genuine. Menardus, Archbishop Laud, Spanheim, and others, deemed it apocryphal". [It is, however, not clear whether it was considered to be apocryphal because it was written by Barnabas (who had fallen out with Paul) or because it is considered that it is a forgery].

The Protevangelion or An Historical Account of the Birth of Christ, and the Perpetual Virgin Mary by James the Lesser: "It is supposed to have been originally composed in Hebrew. Postellus brought the MS. from the Levant, translated it into Latin, and sent it to Oporimus, a printer at Basil, where Bibliander, a Protestant Divine, and the Professor of Divinity at Zurich, caused it to be printed in 1552. Postellus asserts that it was publicly read as canonical in the eastern churches, they making no doubt that James was the author of it. It is, nevertheless, considered apocryphal by some of the most learned divines in the Protestant and Catholic churches".

The Acts of Paul and Thecla: Tertullion says that this piece was forged by a Presbyter of Asia, who being convicted, 'confessed that he did it out of respect of Paul', and Pope Gelasius, in his Decree against apocryphal books, inserted it among them. Notwithstanding this, a large part of history was credited, and looked upon as genuine among the primitive Christians, Cyprian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Austin, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom and Severus Sulpitius who lived within the fourth century, mention Thecla, or refer to her history".

What is important to note is that there being no true basis of divine inspiration, there were a large number of such documents extant in the churches. In many cases their authors were not named or these were ascribed to some better known church dignitaries. Sometimes the writers even forged the events. The following commentary on the Gospel of Nicodemus sheds some interesting light: "Although this Gospel is, by some among the learned, supposed to have been really written by Nicodemus, who became a disciple of Jesus Christ, and conversed with him; others conjecture that it was a forgery towards the close of the third century by some zealous believer, who observing that there had been appeals made by the Christians of the former age, to the Acts of Pilate, but that such Acts could not be produced, imagined it would be

of service to Christianity to fabricate and publish this Gospel; as it would both confirm the Christians under persecution, and convince the Heathens of the truth of the Christian religion. The Rev. Jeremiah Jones says that such "pious frauds were very common among Christians even in the first three centuries; and that a forgery of this nature with the view above mentioned, seems natural and probable".

According to Celsus, the second century C.E. opponent of Christianity, the Christians were "split up into so many factions, each individual desiring to have his own party". About 187 [C.E.] Irenaeus listed twenty varieties of Christianity; about 384 [C.E.] Epiphanius counted eighty" (Will Durant: The Story of Civilization, Part III, Caesar and Christ). Everyone of these factions preferred its own collection of Gospels and other books while at the same time rejecting those possessed by others. Even within the same factions some groups would have access to particular documents while some other group or assembly of the same faction would not have access to it. Thus those not having access, for example, to John's Gospel would be quite unaware about Jesus' promise of the "Paraclete" while some other group having access to this particular Gospel would consider it a cornerstone of their faith. Those unaware of Mathew's and Luke's Gospels would be vague (if not totally ignorant) of Jesus' "virgin birth".

By the year 325 C.E. a very large number of books on Jesus's life and church teachings were extant in various churches in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. There were major doctrinal differences among various churches and many accused each other of following the wrong doctrine. The two main groups were the Trinitarians and the Unitarians. In order to reach an acceptable consensus the Emperor Constantine called a meeting of Christian bishops to settle the matter.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEEA

The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 C.E. proceeded to select the books out of a vast collection of manuscripts which, in their opinion, constituted the authorised Word of God. To start with Emperor Constantine used his imperial authority and disqualified seventeen hundred and thirty bishops from having a voice in decision-making. Among those who did not attend was the reigning Pope, Sylvester I. A great many books were rejected and the books which now comprise the New Testament were voted through YEAS and NAYS. Estimates differ widely as to the number of manuscripts. According to one source there were as many as 4000 manuscripts of the Gospels. Some indicate as few as 50. A figure of 80 is generally talked about. No one really knows the actual figure, and this itself underlines the general confusion surrounding the proceedings. It is doubtful if any of those who were present may have known even the names of all the Gospels presented to the Council. It was decided that all the different Gospels should be placed under a table in the Council Hall. Everyone left the room and the door was locked. The bishops were asked to pray for the whole night that the correct version of the Gospel might come onto the top of the table. In the morning the Gospels acceptable to Athanasius, representative of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, were found neatly placed on top of the table. According to another version all the manuscripts were placed on the table and the unacceptable ones fell off through "divine intervention". [There is no record of who kept the key to the room that night]. It was decided that all the Gospels remaining under the table should be burned. By imperial order it became a capital offense to possess an unauthorised Gospel. As a result, over a million Christians were killed in the years following the Council's decision. It is thus that Emperor Constantine, uninspired, unbaptized, still a sun-worshipper, a man who had committed murder within his own family, indeed his own son in jealousy over his wife, shaped Christianity into what it is today.

This is how the New Testament came into being. Opposition to some of the books, notably "The Revelation" continued. Jerome (C. 382 C.E.) and Philastrius, Bishop of Brixia in Venice (C. 380 C.E.) considered the Epistle to the Hebrews of dubious authority. Philastrius as well as Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (C. 340 C.E.), and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishop of Constantinople (C 375 C.E.), did not accept "Revelations" to be canonical. In 336 C.E. the bishops assembled in Laodicia, presided over by none less than Pope Liberius himself, did not approve of this book. It was only in 367 C.E. that Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria established a list of 27 books, conforming to the presently known New Testament, that were to be read in the churches of his diocese. It is not until 397 C.E. at the third Council of Carthage, at which St. Augustine was present, that the canon of the New Testament was finally adopted in its present form.

As soon as the Christian faith became an accepted religion by the state the church aligned itself with the state itself. It then proceeded to stifle any opposition to its doctrines. "Once triumphant the Church ceased to preach toleration. She looked with the same hostile eye upon individualism in belief as the State upon secession or revolt.... Probably more Christians were slaughtered by Christians themselves in two years AD 342-343, than by all the persecutions in the history of Rome" (Will Durant: The Age of Faith).

"In almost every province of the Roman world an army of fanatics, without authority and without discipline, invaded peaceful inhabitants and the ruins of the fairest structures of antiquity still display the ravages of those barbarians who alone had time and inclination to execute such laborious destruction" (E.Gibbons: Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire).

In order to sustain the "uncorruptness" of the newly adopted Canon all rival documents were ordered to be destroyed. "Every kind of manuscript which could be seized was forthwith burnt. Everywhere men in terror destroyed their libraries for fear that some unfortunate sentence in any of the books should involve them and their families in destruction" (William Draper: Intellectual Development of Europe). Even the ancient literature, the precious treasure consisting of Greek and Roman scholarship, became the victim of the blind frenzy of "uneducated monks". Pope Gregory I not only committed to flames all the mathematical stories of Rome, but also burned the precious Palestine library founded by Emperor Augustus. The invaluable library of Alexandria was destroyed in 389 C.E., by none other than Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria.

The following extracts from "Which Church Is Right" by Mark E. Petersen (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.) will be quite illuminating:

"Wickedness had nearly taken over the church. Doctrines and ordinances were changed, authority was ignored, sin became rampant even among the membership of the church.....Some members denied the Christ, others no longer believed in a resurrection; the doctrines of the Jews had corrupted much of the Christian procedure; the glamour of the pagan rites crept into the Christian rituals. The true doctrine of God was lost. Philosophy from Greece had almost argued away the simple truths of divinity. Each bishop or presiding elder was left to his own devices. The influence of philosophy on the simple truths of the gospel resulted eventually in a completely different concept of the existence of God and the introduction of many of the Greek mysteries as doctrines and practices in the Church. As a result of this we see a new and completely different interpretation of the doctrine of deity which eventually led to the adoption of the Nicene Creed. From Egypt came the adoration of the mother and child; gnosticism and Neoplatonism obscured the true Christian creed, from Phrygia came the worship of the "great mother", and from non-Christian dramatic rituals came a mass with its congeries of prayers, psalms, reading, and recitations....

Then came the days of Constantine the Great. With an eye to political advantage, and not because of conversion, for he remained a sun-worshiper through most of his life and was not baptized as a Christian for twenty-five years... He was of the opinion that with the renewed popularity of this now-changed Christianity, it was the religion of the future. He therefore took the Christian religion under his wing. Making it the favored religion of the state gave to the emperor vast influence in the operation of the church, which in later times

virtually became a department of the civil government, placing the emperor in a position to direct it very much as he directed other departments of his government....

Noting the division which existed in the church in his day, Constantine set out to settle the difficulty. First he turned to Africa where was developing a most bitter schism. He had no ecclesiastical authority and claimed none. But he was all-powerful politically. It was by his political authority as emperor that he intervened in the African dispute....

A short time afterward, again by his authority as emperor and civil ruler of the western half of the Roman Empire, he called a council of all bishops of that part of the empire which was under his control. This meeting was at Arles. Certain of the clergy who were present objected to the decisions made there concerning baptism and the authority of the church. Constantine resorted to force to bring them into line. A massacre ensued; blood flowed, a number of the objectors who escaped with their lives were banished; but Constantine had his way. In the place of bishops who opposed him, he appointed other bishops of his own choice by his political authority as emperor. But this was only the beginning of installation of bishops by civil rulers....

He called a council of all bishops of the church to settle the Alexandrian dispute over the doctrine of the nature of God. He listened to the arguments of the contending bishops. He favored the Athanasian side. The Arians who still objected were banished, and he appointed new bishops in place of them. And by what power? Divine authority he had none. He acted as emperor and the authority by which he appointed these bishops was political, not divine. They became appointees of Constantine, not of the Lord. In this Nicene council, (325 C.E.) Constantine, still a sun-worshiper, by his political power took the steps which gave to later Christianity its doctrine concerning the nature of the God whom they worshiped"

What sort of a man was this Constantine who became champion of Christianity? "He was not baptized a Christian until his death-bed. Meanwhile he not only tolerated paganism but even encouraged the strictly anti-Christian imperial cult. He believed thoroughly in absolutism and brought to completion the tendency towards despotic rule...He was noted for his outbursts of violent temper. He had his son Crispas put to death on charges brought by his wife Fausta and later had Fausta put to death for bringing false charges....." (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Second Edition), "Although in the East there lingered an abhorrence, inspired by the Jews, for representational images, in the West Christians had begun representing Jesus in the guise of sun-god Apollo or Osepheus, the priest of sun.....Constantine himself mixed Christianity and the Sol Invictus cult.....The extent to which Constantine, of no great education, even understood the theological issues is by no means clear.....for him the deification of a man was nothing particularly special" (Ian Wilson: Jesus, The Evidence).

AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The books of the New Testament are classified as Gospels, History, Letters and Apocalypse. the four Gospels provide a glimpse into the life and teachings of Jesus. The book of Acts tells the history of the early church following the ascension of Jesus through Paul's journeys and two years in Rome. There are twenty-one Letters, including nine or possibly ten, written by Paul. Remaining of the Letters are attributed to various early leaders. The Apocalypse is a vision into future in the Book of Revelation whose author is stated to be John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved". In order to verify the authenticity of the various books/Letters included in the New Testament it is necessary to know as to who were their authors, what were their claims to be considered as "inspired" and therefore to be worthy of being accepted as sacred. In discussing each book we shall first of all borrow the description from notes entitled "Summary of the Books of Bible" written by G.J. Spurrel and Rev. Ch. H. Wright and which are included at the end of the Holy Bible published by the World Publishing Co., Cleveland/New York, U.S.A. The narration will then be followed by comments from other sources.

[In the New Testament the first book is always the Gospel according to St. Matthew. It is now generally accepted that in actual fact the first Gospel to be written was the one ascribed to St.

Mark. In order therefore to keep the matter straight we shall start with that Gospel. This practice will be followed throughout this book unless otherwise required for textual needs).

St. Mark: "There is good reason for believing that most of the material which St. Mark used is the preaching of St. Peter. He was called Peter's interpreter because he communicated to others what he had heard from Peter's own lips. It is believed that St. Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome for the Gentiles".

St. Mark is supposed to be John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, who is said to be the cause of split between Barnabas and Paul and whom Paul considered to be untrustworthy for taking along on their missionary journeys. This information alone should make us doubtful of his authorship as it would have been most unlikely that the followers of Paul would accept something as canonical and sacred if it was indeed this very Mark who wrote it.

From the fact that Jesus' apocalyptic discourse (MT 13) is included and the destruction of Jerusalem clearly indicated (prophecy after the event!), it is thought that it might not have been written till after 66 C.E. when the Jewish rebellion against Rome began. It was probably not written long after AD 70 as both Matthew and Luke have borrowed from it extensively. Some think that Mark, Matthew and Luke, all three of them, copied from an earlier, now unknown, Gospel which the researchers refer to as the "Q" manuscript for want of a better name. Some suggest that the author of this "Q" was Barnabas himself. However, Christians presently believe that Mark's was the first Gospel which was later borrowed from by Matthew and Luke. Researches feel that Mark's Gospel was written in Hebrew for Christians of Jewish origin, but not apparently for those with extensive knowledge of Biblical lore. It was then translated into a not so polished Greek and re-translated into Latin. All the Hebrew and early Greek versions have been destroyed. In fact it was extinct for a considerable time and when a mutilated copy was found, some of its pages were missing and an unknown hand added some concluding verses. We can never be sure of the real author of the Gospel of Mark; at best it is a second hand narration and not an eye-witness account. It is through a second-century Christian bishop named Papias that we learn that someone named Mark had written this Gospel".

Since this Gospel is also the basis for the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. It is therefore of special significance to trace the authorship of the Markan Gospel. Firstly let us consider the "Petrine material" or Peter being the source of the information which Mark records in his Gospel.

"The grounds for this statement are of two kinds. (1) Much of the information in the Gospel is about things which were not witnessed by anyone except Peter (and sometimes one or two others), e.g. 14:66-72, 14:32, 1:29-39, 9:2-13. (2) Not only is there a disproportionately large amount of material about Peter himself, but much of it is of so unflattering a kind that it is felt unlikely to have been reported about the prince of apostles by anyone except himself, e.g. 8:32-33" (D.E. Nineham: St. Mark). [As for the unlikelihood of anyone reporting unflatteringly about Peter (Cephas), the prince of the apostles, one has only to read Paul's tirades against him, e.g. Gal (2:9): "reputed pillars of our society, James, Cephas and John" Gal (2:11-12), "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed".

Regarding the testimony of Papias that John Mark was the actual author, let us recognise that Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, himself lived in the second century and bases his testimony on the authority of an 'elder'. "In the last forty years or so [as of 1963, the year of first publication of the book from where this quotation is derived] Papias' statement has come in for a good deal of criticism, and most contemporary scholars agree that in places St. Mark's material bears all the signs of having been community tradition and cannot therefore be derived directly from St. Peter or any other eye-witness" (D.E. Nineham: St. Mark).

Thus, not only that Papias' authority is a mere conjecture, the authenticity of the material on which the Gospel is based is also doubtful. This would then also apply to the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke which in turn are based on the Markan Gospel.

St. Matthew: "There is abundant evidence for believing that this book was written by St. Matthew who may be safely identified with Levi. The whole tone of the gospel is Hebraic and may be regarded as the last word of Jehovah to His ancient people. It most closely connects the Old Covenant with the new".

In spite of what may be believed by the faithful who considered it to be the first Gospel, few today doubt that it was written after Mark's. Matthew incorporates almost all of Mark's material without acknowledging it. This gospel according to the tradition was first written in Aramaic and later translated into Greek. Christian tradition points to the disciple Matthew, "who was sitting at the receipt of custom" (MT 9:9) when called by Jesus, as the author of this gospel but there is no evidence beyond the mere tradition. Holy books, in the Jewish tradition, rarely carried any notice of real authorship but were assigned to some ancient worthy. Such books being "inspired by God", the worldly author, after all, was supposed to be acting as a mouthpiece and deserved no credit. The time of writing this Gospel was particularly hard with persecution by Nero and resentment of Jews towards Christians for not having joined the rebellion. It might well be that the gospel writer preferred to remain anonymous out of consideration of personal safety as well.

It is interesting that the Gospels do not agree on the name of the disciple whom "Matthew" calls Matthew, the publican, or tax gatherer (MT 10:3). Mark's man at the custom house is Levi, son of Alphaeus (MK 2:14), but while counting the names of "the Twelve", the son of Alphaeus is named as James. He also mentions a certain Matthew, yet no Levi. Whatever the name, it seems strange that "Matthew", the disciple, who should have been an eye-witness to Jesus' life, borrows extensively from the "Q" document and from the "young man" Mark, who was definitely not an eye-witness himself, rather than give his own account of Jesus and his teachings. This confirms the view that Matthew, the Gospel writer must have been someone other than Matthew, the disciple, even if there was indeed a disciple by that name. According to Rev. J. P. Philips of the Chickster Cathedral in England: "Early tradition ascribed this Gospel to the Apostle Matthew, but scholars now a days almost all reject this view".

St. Luke: "Luke gives the teachings of St. Paul... He is rightly called the 'Father of Christian Church History'. St. Luke prefers to accept Jesus as the Saviour of all men and the satisfier of all needs rather than the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy".

Thus we see in this Gospel the beginning of the building of a myth. Luke himself was most probably a Gentile and writes for the Gentiles. We really do not know who this Luke is. It is usually believed that he was Paul's personal physician (Col 4:14). According to tradition it is the same Luke who also wrote "Acts" unless someone borrowed his name for that book. It is rather strange that, in case the writer is really Luke the physician who was by the side of Paul in many of his journeys and of whom Paul mentions "sends his greetings" in his letter to the Colossians (4:14), Luke seems to be oblivious of the existence of any of the Epistles that Paul wrote to a number of churches. This gives strength to the suspicion that someone else wrote the Gospel and the book of Acts and just borrowed Luke's name as the author. Beyond that we know almost nothing about the author or even Luke himself.

The Synoptic Gospels: The three Gospels by Mark, Matthew and Luke have much in common and the last two seem to have borrowed heavily from the former. For this reason they present a common picture, yet from different angles of the teachings of Jesus, and are called the Synoptic Gospels. The commonality of textual verses between these three Gospel is listed below:

Common to all the three Synoptic Gospels	330
Common to Mark and Matthew	178
Common to Mark and Luke	100
Common to Matthew and Luke	230
Unique to Mark	53
Matthew	330
Luke	500

St. John: "This was written by John the beloved disciple. It is the most influential book in all literature. He writes for adult Christians to confirm them in the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him they may have life in His name. It was written in Ephesus, where he lived during the last portion of his life".

This, the fourth gospel, was written quite late, for a community that was already Christian but was involved in doctrinal disputes. The picture of Jesus he gives us is very different from the other three Gospels. It should be considered as a form of didactic fiction. It was written somewhere between 80-150 C.E. most probably 100 C.E. which makes it likely that it was written by someone who was using the name of the 'beloved disciple' to give the halo of authority to his writing and give force to his own theology.

"There are reasons why the Gospels, and the story they tell us, should be treated with caution. These were written 40 to 100 years after crucifixion. Thus they are based on hearsay from a long past. No man can recall past events without being affected by what has happened in between. The oral evidence must have been polluted. There is no reason why the evangelists should be expected to escape this natural tendency. Moreover, two factors made them particularly vulnerable to it: first, the partial or predominantly oral nature of their sources, which were then particularly susceptible to influence by contemporary colour, and secondly, the extraordinary rapid, radical developments which transformed the infant church during the decades that separated the Gospels from Jesus' death and made it difficult for their writers to understand how things had been before these changes occurred" (C.K. Burnett: Luke the Historian in Recent Study, Epworth Press, 1961).

Acts of the Apostles: "Was written by Luke, who was the companion of St. Paul". However, there are doubts if it was really the same Luke or someone else using his name. The time and place of its writing are also not certain.

Paul's Writings: Most of the New Testament books that follow are said to have been written by Paul in the form of Letters to church groups such as Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and to individuals Timothy, Titus and Philemon. There are, however, doubts if Paul was really the author of some of these epistles e.g. Timothy and Titus. Some later interpolations are also strongly suspected in some of the others, such as the injunctions against women's role in I Corinthians. There is no record of Paul's II Corinthian epistle before 145 C.E. and that too as a part of Marcion's canon of Paul's writings which exists only in Tertullian's rhetoric "Against Marcion". Many think that this epistle is in fact a joining of fragments from three different letters by a later editor. There are differences of style. In fact 6:14 to 7:1 seem almost certainly to be a later interpolation. These letters, or Epistles, form the basis of what we now know of Christianity. Paul's teachings, being the earliest, influenced the contents of the four Gospels and cast a long shadow over the other books of the New Testament.

Hebrews: ".....It was originally ascribed to Paul but later it is believed to have been written by some other person, possibly one who had come under the influence of Paul". It is in the form of a letter. Several names have been suggested: as for example, Silas or Barnabas as at several

places this Epistle runs against the arguments of Paul in his other Epistles. However, the Greek of this Epistle is polished which could not be that of Barnabas. Martin Luther suggested that Apollos, an associate of Paul (Acts 18:24), wrote this. Some emphasise that "if Apollos were not the author, he ought to" because of his eloquence and scriptural knowledge. Anyway, for our purpose the author of 'Hebrews' remains uncertain.

James: is ascribed to James, the brother of Jesus. If indeed it was written by him then this would be the earliest book in the New Testament as it would have to be prior to the Council of Jerusalem held in 48 C.E. The book is written in better Greek than one might expect of a relatively unlettered Galilean that James is known to be. Most likely it was written around 90 C.E. by someone else who, as was not uncommon, may have ascribed the authorship to the popular notable James.

1 & 2 Peter: There are two letters ascribed to Peter, the Apostle. If Peter wrote these epistles, then these would have had to be written before 64 C.E. by which time Peter is stated to have been crucified in Rome although even this event or its date remains uncertain. And yet the Bible says nothing directly of Peter's stay in Rome, and Paul, in the epistles written from Roman imprisonment during the indicated period, gives no indication of the presence of Peter there. Most commentators believe that these were not written by Peter at all and may have been written about 90 C.E. or even 150 C.E. by someone using his name. In fact these are not mentioned by others prior to 200 C.E. Most early Christians had believed that the second coming of Jesus was to be soon as the kingdom of God was 'at hand'. Paul also promised "imminence". It was expected that this would be within the life time of John the Evangelist as Jesus was quoted to have said: "If it should be my will that he wait until I come, what is it to you?" (Jn 21:23). But the years passed after the Temple's destruction, and no second coming took place. Many Christians of Jewish background may even have felt that the destruction of the Temple could only have been the sign of God's anger at the Christian heresy. The increasing number of Christians of Gentile extraction, openly hostile to Jews, must have attributed this to God's avenging the death of Jesus. Yet there soon was persecution by the Romans not only of the Jews but also of the Christians themselves and the second coming of Jesus was nowhere and rather seemed to be endlessly delayed. The writer of "2 Peter" decided he must exercise his ingenuity to explain the stretched-out delay:

2 Peter (3.8,9): "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness".

This has been borrowed from the Psalms (90:4): "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past".

John's Epistles There are three Epistles which are attributed to John whether or not John is actually the writer. These were probably written by the same persons who wrote the fourth Gospel. Jesus had said "there shall arise false Christs" (Mt 24:24). Christian believed that before the return of Jesus the Christ an Antichrist will arise. John tells us "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists" (1 Jn 2:18). Throughout history Christians have used this label freely to denounce their opponents, even Christians whom they considered heretics. Paul himself may have thought of Caligula as such. Nero and other Roman emperors were so considered because of their anti-Christian behaviour. Later many reformers were also so labelled and the field remains wide open.

Epistle of Jude: was written about the time the two 'Peter' letters were written and therefore not by Judah, the brother of James. It is unusual that it contains quotes from literature considered apocryphal by Jews, Catholics, as well as Protestants and which was lost or destroyed in the early years.

The Book of Revelation: The last book in New Testament, though not the last written, is "Apocalypse of John" as the Roman Catholic Bible has it or "Revelation of John" as many versions have called it, or merely 'Revelaton' as in some modern Bibles. "The first three Chapters of the book are comparatively easy to understand, but the intermediate chapters are full of dark visions, the exact meaning of which we are not likely to discover until the Lord comes.....there are also allegories and parables for the interpretation of which we at present lack the means. This book is also ascribed to the writer of the fourth Gospel. The mid-portion of the book was originally written in Aramaic, then translated into Greek. Some unnamed Christian edited the book in 150 C.E. and added what are now its first two chapters. A century later still, another individual, presumably also Christian, added what are now the final two chapters. Both Aramaic and Greek versions have vanished. A Latin translation survived, however, and was included in early versions of the Bible, not as an integral part, but as a kind of appendix to the New Testament.

There has been considerable controversy regarding the inclusion of this book in the canon of the New Testament. Many bishops writing in the later part of the fourth century omit it, e.g. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (C. 340 C.E.), Gregory Nazianzus, Bishop of Constantinople (Circa. 375 C.E.), Philastrius, Bishop of Brixia in Venice (C. 380 C.E.). The Council of Laodicia (C.336 C.E.) also did not include it as part of the New Testament. It seems to have been finally approved in 397 C.E. at the third Council of Carthage. Possibly a good way to describe the Book of Revelation is to call it a "Fantastic Fantasy" or the "Dream of Dreams". It is description of a prophecy. According to the writer of this Book "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, a Trumpet, saying I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and what thou seest, write in a book"(Rev 1:10,11). The writer then takes us into a fantastic journey into prophetic future. It talks about the mystical number 666 of the Beast of prophecy the meaning of which is still hidden and puzzling. Because of its ambiguous 'prophecy' this book has been a favorite for many splinter sects who thrive on the "doom and destruction" theme of this book which also promises redemption through Lord's return.

"Many passages in the book of Revelation have so many possible meanings that they come very close to having no meaning at all ... Many early authorities considered this book to be apocryphal, and it was accepted very grudgingly by the Eastern Church... gives the readers the suspicion that the entire contents of a particularly well-stocked occult bookstore have somehow been compacted into a single volume — astrology, numerology, cabalism, and all sorts of esoteric and obscurantist wisdom are here in abundance. The number of verses that seem to have a clear, unequivocal, meaning can be counted on the fingers of one hand" (Manfred Barthel: What the Bible Really Says).

Christianity had its origin in Judaism. Jesus and his Apostles preached and addressed to the Jews only. Their hope was to convince them that Jesus is the promised Messiah. That hope lived on even in the Gentile-dominated Christianity. It was always Israel which was to be restored for they were the inheritors of the Old Covenant. It is to their remnant that Jesus will come, albeit a pious and converted remnant:

Rev: (7:3): "Hurt not the earth....till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads".

Rev:(7:4): "the number of them which were sealed.....an hundred and forty four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel".

Jesus had said [did he?] of John : "If it should be my will that he wait until I come..." (JN 21:22). So in the closing lines of the Book of Revelation, the author John(?), the disciple whom Jesus loved, keeps saying "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20) and even though Jesus kept

assuring "I come quickly" (Rev. 22:12,21), the expectation remained unfulfilled and John died. The expectation remains unfulfilled nineteen hundred years later even though everyone kept saying that "the hour of fulfillment is near". This book is generally considered to be composed of three different fragments: Chapter 1-3 and four of the last verses (22:16-7, 20-21) are from Christian sources which have been stitched to Jewish substance. Christian apocalypses draw on Greek mythology. One book of revelation contains Babylonian, Zoroastrian, Egyptian and Persian roots; seven spirits, women clothed with the sun, great red dragon. Astrological sources: The red dragon is definial by a constellation, battle field of stars. Numerology: 24 elders, 4 winds, 7 trumpeters, 144,000 children of Israel 7 plagues (As were the seven plagues for Pharaoh and the Egyptian people), 10,000 times 10,000 angels, 1203 score days, above all the mysterious number 666 of the sign of the Beast. There seems to be a competition of sixes and sevens (One may call it a circus of sixes and sevens interspersed with other number (of Jokers?)).

The book of Revelation defies any coherent interpretation, and being vague, has therefore been a favourite tool of prophecy of a large number of evangelists. The only reason for inclusion of this book in canon seems to be the time-table, actual countdown, however ambiguous and unintelligible, that it provides for the "imminent" return of Jesus. Without this hope of his final victory his mission remains a total failure and he could not be acceptable as a Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour, by the faithful. **THE HOPE LIVES ON!**

ETHIOPIAN COPTIC VERSION: It may be mentioned that in addition to the above-mentioned books of the New Testament, the Ethiopian Copts include the Shepherd of Hermas and the Apocalypse of Ezra. These are rejected by the other Christian denominations.

VERSIONS (TRANSLATIONS) OF THE BIBLE

To be fair to the translators it must be recognized that various versions of the Bible, e.g. King James Authorised Version, New International Version, New World Translation, etc., some of which as translated in English are listed under Bibliography at the end of this book, are mere English translations of Hebrew and Greek documents. Similar translations exist in other languages. This ought to make them parallel and similar to each other except for the variations in style and language. This, however, is not the case. As we have already pointed out, the differences among various "versions" are not merely the variations in the language used by different translators. One major difference is of course the number of books as included in a particular version. Furthermore, since there is no "standard" text, the translations are based on what each group of translators has accepted to be the "most authentic". Each group thus makes its own judgment on what it considers to be the "most authentic".

Each set of documents has its own problems since errors in the earlier (even "original") documents were carried on to its various copies made later and subsequent copies from these copies, etc., copying errors increasing at each stage of hand copying. Thus translations based on different documents also differ from each other to that extent as well.

Luther, for example, had no original texts to work from and based his excellent German translation on a Hebrew edition of the Old Testament prepared by Gershon ben Moshe Soncino published in Brescia in 1494 C.E. If he had access to the very first, "original", documents he would have also found that many quotations from the Old Testament as given in the New Testament are in fact not correctly quoted. This is because, in the early days, when scrolls of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) were clumsily bulky and costly, the texts were only heard by the worshipers as read in the synagogues and thus susceptible to mis-hearing and, therefore mis-quoting. This indeed happened and instances abound where references in the New Testament of Old Testament verses are mis-quoted or quoted out of context. We shall come across many such instances in later chapters and appendices of this book.

IS
"THE WORD OF GOD"
SEXIST, RACIST & PREJUDICED
?

POLITICALLY CORRECT BIBLE

LONDON: A new Bible that tries to avoid sexism, racism and even prejudice against left-handed people may be published in Britain despite condemnation by some British clergymen, a spokeswoman for its publishers said on Monday.

Oxford University Press's version of the Bible, to be published in the United States in February, calls Jesus "The Human One" instead of the "Son of Man", and refers to God as "Father-Mother". References to the "right hand" of God have been removed and replaced with "the mighty hand".

OUP said a team of "eminent biblical scholars" was analysing the Bible to decide whether it was suitable for publication in Britain and no decision had been made.

But several clergymen condemned the new Bible, "The traditional language of the Bible is part of its majesty. It is ludicrous to invent language in this way", George Austin, Archdeacon of York, told the Daily Express newspaper. —
Reuter.

THE NEWS, ISLAMABAD
December 6, 1994

CHAPTER II

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

In the earlier Chapter we have traced the origin and history of various books of the Bible. In this Chapter we shall discuss various claims that have been made about the Bible, its divine origin, infallibility of its contents, etc. The claims that we shall deal with have been drawn from a number of books. However, since the claims are universal, book references are given only where long excerpts have been included. In order to keep the arguments concise we shall include just a few examples where needed and these too mainly regarding the New Testament since our main focus is on the life and teachings of Jesus. It will then be followed by discussion of other claims about the whole Bible, with emphasis on the New Testament.

It is a common knowledge that transmittal of knowledge even through most sophisticated means is always subject to errors. Even when messages are conveyed most accurately there can be ambiguities and variant interpretations by the same people at different times or in different moods. The text of the message can be changed, mutilated and corrupted through successive transmittals, and not necessarily deliberately. Events of the past as narrated by different eye-witnesses can be described differently. The passage of time clouds the memory and events, especially words, are forgotten or mixed with myths. It is estimated that we remember only about 10% of what we hear and 5% of what we see. Add to it the upheaval of post-crucifixion years, long distances from Jerusalem to where these holy books were written, the long passage of time and successive transmission of the information which was never intended for long time preservation. All this adds up to doubt and confusion.

In the case of the books of the Bible the original manuscripts of all these books have been lost. However, copies of these books made from oral traditions or copies made several centuries later are now available in parts or whole. We must recognise that in those early ages there were no printing presses and "each copy was made slowly and laboriously by hand. Under these conditions it was inevitable that many ancient books should be lost. This largely accounts for the fact that all the original manuscripts of the Bible have perished" (The New Chain Reference Bible). "The New Testament in very early times had no canonical authority, and alternations and additions were actually made where they seemed improvements" (Encyclopedia Biblica). A copyist might try to improve the sense of an obscure passage or possibly a church leader would alter the meaning of a sentence to make it conform to current doctrine. A recent error made after the invention of printing is contained in what is jokingly known as "The Wicked Bible" which is in fact the 1631 C.E. copy of KJV where because of omission of "not" in Ex(20:14) the verse was printed as "Thou shalt commit adultery". After all, to err is human. "As a matter of fact every book in the New Testament, with the exception of four great Epistles of St. Paul, is at present more or less the subject of controversy and interpolations are asserted even in these (Enc. Brit. 12th Edition).

Thus, it is common knowledge that none of the books of the Bible, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, are accurate beyond reasonable doubt. Once an error was made, through omission or deliberate interpolation or at the editing stage, these errors were successively copied by later scribes. Thus these errors and interpolations got multiplied in hundreds of subsequent copies. It is estimated that some two hundred thousand variant readings exist in thousands of known manuscripts of various books of the New Testament alone. NO TWO MANUSCRIPTS ARE EXACTLY THE SAME! The earliest available manuscript of the Old

Testament dates back to 7th Century C.E. except for fragments of Psalms recently discovered which possibly belong to 4th century, and some scrolls found at the Dead Sea.

The following excerpts from the Introduction to the Revised Standard Version may be illuminating: "The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek Text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscripts copying....It has grave defects....so many and so serious... For New Testament we have a large number of Greek manuscripts preserving many variant forms of the text. Some of them were made only two or three centuries later than the original composition of the books. For the Old Testament only late mss survive, all (with the exception of the Dead Sea texts) established many centuries after the books were written. Sometimes it is evident that the text has suffered in transmission, but none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text. Many difficulties and obscurities, of course, remain. If in the judgment of the Committee [of thirty two scholars] the meaning of a passage is quite uncertain or obscure, either because of corruption in the text or because of the inadequacy of our present knowledge, the fact is indicated by a note. It should not be assumed, however, that the Committee was entirely sure or unanimous concerning every rendering not so indicated".

St. Augustine mentions in a letter (ixxx:4) to St. Jerome that "when in the pages of the Sacred Writ I come upon anything that is contrary to the truth, I judge that the text is faulty, that the translation did not strike the right meaning, or simply that I do not understand it".

The following remarks are quoted from THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE "Introduction to the New Testament: "The text of the majority of the manuscripts had been exposed not only to the accidental corruption of long- continued copying, but also in part to deliberate correction and 'improvement... The problem of restoring a form of text as near as possible to the vanished autographs now appears less simple than it did to our predecessors.....The present translators therefore could do no other than consider variant readings on their merits, and, having weighed the evidence for themselves, select for translation in each passage the reading which to the best of their judgment seemed most likely to represent what the author wrote.....The translators are well aware that their judgment is at best provisional....."

It is often stated that "not one of the many variants has been found to affect any important New Testament teachings". That would be a valid point if it was known that these are the only variants that ever existed. What if manuscripts containing alternate doctrines had been intentionally and systematically obliterated? This would then mean that the truth was deliberately made to be lost. We know it in no ambiguous terms that all the alternate books were ordered to be burnt on pain of death after Christianity became the state religion. There is, therefore, no assurance that the manuscripts now available are the copies of the authentic originals. All we have are revised and re-revised versions of a pre-selected set of documents in their questionable form.

Credit goes to Sir Isaac Newton who detected a clever forgery in 1 Timothy(3:16) which, according to KJV reads thus: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Sir Isaac noted that the word "O" (which or who) was cleverly altered to "Theos" (God) at Constantinople in the beginning of the sixth century C.E. Shorn of this forgery the basic New Testament doctrine of "God manifested in flesh", or incarnation, falls flat. The correct version is visible in Syriac and Latin versions and reasoning of early church fathers. Almost all the modern versions now use "He", Some give footnotes saying that "some manuscripts use which, who, or God".

Another patent fraud detected by Sir Isaac Newton concerns 1 John(5:7-8) which in KJV reads thus: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood and these three agree in one." This version is not present in any and every Greek manuscript before the invention of printing with the exception of Codex Montfortii now kept in Trinity College, Dublin. This version is also not present in the Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, Coptic, Sabidic, Armenian, Slavonian, and other versions. This forgery found its way into the Vulgate but even for this the oldest manuscripts do not include it. This spurious version was first alleged by the Catholic bishops (actually the four bishops who composed the profession of faith) whom Emperor Hunneric had summoned to the Council of Carthage. It first appeared as a marginal text in a late fourteenth century C.E. Latin text and soon became part of the epistle itself. None of the available versions originating earlier than the 15th century contain this passage. After the invention of printing the fraudulent version continued to be included in the printed copies of the Vulgate and into New Testament English translation of Erasmus and eventually into King James Version which continues to carry it. However, almost all modern versions now exclude it. The now accepted version reads thus: "Thus there are three that testify, the spirit, and the water and the blood and these three are of one accord". In order to accommodate this shorter version some of the versions split verse 6 into verses 6 and 7, some indicate it as a combined verse 7,8 and some as verses 7 and 8. The exclusion of the spurious addition does effect an important New Testament teaching and certainly weakens the very basis of the doctrine of Trinity, if there is at all any basis.

Concerning the four Gospels it is now generally accepted, except by diehard fundamentalists, that none of the authors were eyewitnesses. It is doubtful if Mark was really present at the time of crucifixion of Jesus. In any case he was too young at the time. If Peter did impart to him his own knowledge of the incidences and later occurrences, Peter himself being conspicuously absent at Calvary, then his account is at best third hand. Since it is also doubtful whether he is the actual author, the information in this earliest Gospel becomes stale and suspect of adulteration.

Matthew and Luke base their Gospels mainly on the Gospel of Mark adding here and there some additional or variant material as suited them or their audiences. John is the only one who claims to be present at the time of crucifixion. Yet it is now widely conjectured that someone other than John the Elder wrote the Gospel based on the knowledge or notes of John "the disciple that Jesus loved". By the time of the writing of this last of the canonical Gospels heated debates about the variant doctrines were raging among the then Christian churches. This Gospel is therefore full of rhetoric which Jesus or his close band of disciples may not recognise.

The Gospels between themselves differ on many essential details. Let us consider just one example, that of the "LORD'S PRAYER". This is the only teaching of Jesus wherein he instructs his disciples how to pray. Mark and John do not even mention it. Matthew and Luke give their own separate versions. The LORD'S PRAYER if it was indeed taught by Jesus, must have been memorised by Jesus' disciples and later followers for a long time after Jesus in its' original words. Yet today we do not have any record of what Jesus really spoke and taught. Even the two versions cited by Matthew and Luke differ from each other.

LORD'S PRAYER (KJV)

ACCORDING TO MATTHEW (6: 9-13)	ACCORDING TO LUKE (11: 2-4)
Our Father, Which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name Thy kingdom come Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven Give us this day our daily bread And forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil.	Our Father, Which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name Thy kingdom come Thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth Give us day by day our daily bread and forgive our sins for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever, Amen.	

It is certain that the original words quoted by the two Gospel writers must have been very different for the same translators to have translated these differently. This is not the case with the King James Version only. All other versions also record these differently. In fact many Christian churches, especially the Roman Catholics, consider that the words "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever" are a later unauthorised insertion by some unknown scribe. Even for the same Gospel, different manuscripts cited hereunder record different words:

LORD'S PRAYER ACCORDING TO LUKE

NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

Father, thy name be hallowed

OTHER MSS

- Our Father in Heaven
1. Thy Kingdom come on us
2. Thy Holy spirit come upon us
and cleanse us.

SOME OTHER MANUSCRIPTS

Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.

OTHER VERSIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS

- NAS: Father, hallowed be Thy name
Thy kingdom come
NWT: Father, let your name be sanctified,
let your kingdom come.
NIV: Father Hallowed be Thy
name, your kingdom come

OTHER MSS

Our Father in heaven your kingdom come,
may your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven.

- RBV: Father your name be held holy, your
kingdom come
GNB: Father: May your holy name be
honoured; may your kingdom come.
RSV: Father, hallowed be thy name, thy
kingdom come;

Give us each day our
daily bread

OTHER MSS

Give us each day our
bread for the morrow

[In most modern translations the
version "bread for the morrow"
is given in footnotes because no
one knows exactly what it means
(Manfred Barthel: What The Bible Really Says)]

TJB: Father your name be held holy, your
kingdom come;

NAS: Give us each day our daily bread

NWT: Give us our bread for the day
according to the day's requirements.

NIV: Give us each day our daily bread.

RBV: Daily grant us food for the coming day.

GNB: Give us day by day the food we need.

RSV: Give us each day our daily bread.

TJB: Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins for we too forgive
all who have also done us wrong

NAS: And forgive our sins, for we ourselves
also forgive everyone who is indebted
to us. for we ourselves

NWT: And forgive our sins for we ourselves
forgive everyone that is in debt to us

NIV: Forgive us our sins for we also forgive
everyone who sins against us.

OTHER MSS

Everyone who is indebted to us.

RBV: And forgive us our sins for we also
forgive everyone indebted to us.

GNB: Forgive our sins, for we forgive
everyone who does us wrong.

RSV: And forgive us our sins, for we
ourselves forgive everyone who is
indebted to us.

TJB: And forgive our sins for we ourselves
forgive each one who is in debt to us.

And do not bring us to the test

GNB: Do not bring us to hard testing.

NWT: And do not bring us into temptation.

NIV: And lead us not into temptation.

OTHER MSS

And do not bring us to the test
but save us from the evil one

NAS: And lead us not into temptation but
deliver us from the evil one.

RBV: And brings us not into temptation

RSV: And lead us not into temptation

TJB: And do not put us to test

It must be re-emphasised that the differences in words are not merely the way these
are translated. The actual differences lie in the language of the original manuscripts
themselves so that the same translators were forced to translate these differently. Such are
the differences among the "MOST AUTHENTIC MANUSCRIPTS" in a matter which is a direct
teaching of Jesus which must have been memorised and repeated in prayers by his disciples and
later followers. To quote Josh McDowell from his book More Than A Carpenter: "In the Jewish

religion it was customary for a student to memorize a rabbi's teaching. A good pupil was like 'a plastered cistern that loses not a drop' (Mishna, Aboth ii, 8)". If this happened with Jesus' most famous direct teaching then what may have happened to his lesser known words, spoken in his native ARAMAIC (Syriac dialect) but recorded in Greek by the Gospel writers, is anyone's guess. Unfortunately, these are lost forever and we cannot place much reliance on what has been conveyed to us.

The words are not the only problem. According to Matthew this prayer was taught in the course of what is now come to be known as the "SERMON ON THE MOUNT" since the sermon was supposed to have been given up on a hill (MT 5:1). However, according to Luke this prayer was not taught as part of that particular sermon which was given "down the hill.....on level ground"(LK 6: 17). Luke records it later: "Once in a certain place, Jesus was at prayer. When he ceased, one of the disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples. He answered: 'when you pray, say:' (LK 11: 1-2).

An interesting question is posed: Did the "Lord's prayer" indeed originate with Jesus? The first (of the two) Book of Adam and Eve written by an ancient Egyptian says that after their disobedience Adam and Eve stood under the altar and wept thus entreating God, "Forgive us our trespass". This quotation is taken from a prayer which is said to be used about 150 years BEFORE Jesus: "Our Father who art in Heaven be gracious unto us, Lord our God, hallowed be thy name, And let the remembrance of thee be glorified. In heaven above and upon earth here below. Let thy kingdom reign over us now and forever. The Holy Men of old said remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done upto me. And lead us not unto temptation. But deliver us from the evil thing; For thine is the kingdom and thou shalt reign in glory forever and forevermore. AMEN!" (Source : Forgothen Books of Eden). Matthew and Luke just borrowed an old prayer and made it the Lord's! There indeed was no "Sermon on the Mount"(or in the Valley) and in fact it is said to be a mere collection of some of Jesus's famous sayings!

According to professor J. Volckaert, S. J., of St. Mary's Theological College, Kurslong, ("Introduction" to The Four Gospels, written by F.C. Bulcke; S.J.): "It should be noted that at times the evangelist adds to the discourse of Our Lord his own theological interpretation. It is evident that we should not expect the saying of our Lord to be reproduced word for word....We should not expect a miraculous reproduction of the exact word of our divine Saviour; moreover, we have not the words of Our Lord as he spoke them in his mother tongue".

"It may come as a surprise to learn that writers of New Testament books adapted Jesus' sayings and stories to new situations. The fact is they did so in a number of cases. One example is found in Jesus' story of the wise and foolish builders ... Matthew's version spoke of building a house on rock versus sand ... Luke's version ... was crafted for a new audience. He compared building of a house on a deep foundation or without one ... Such examples and there are many show that the Gospel writers had divine license to adjust Jesus Christ's original wording ... We should not insist on harmonizing every detail in the Gospels. That is the literalist's dilemma. Neither should we see differences in the accounts as hopeless contradictions" (Paul Kroll: The Bible, Truth or Fiction, The Plain Truth magazine, March 1993, pp. 11, Pasadena, CA, U.S.A.). We may, however, question the authority of this "divine licence". Since the whole problem of Christian dogma is indeed created by words such as whether Jesus was a "son" of God or The "Son" of God and whether Jesus did indeed utter certain words or sentences, this admission of "divine licence" to change the words lies at the root of Christian blasphemy that God was incarnated in a human form.

Commenting on the well known confusion of Jesus, "Why callest thou me good?" (MK 10:17) the Christian scholar Dummelow says that in the Revised Version of Matthew, Jesus'

reply is: "Why asked thou me" and adds: "The author of Matthew altered the text slightly, to prevent the reader from supposing that Christ denied that he was good". Now, if it were truly the word of God, then God and God alone can authorise or revise it. For the authority for the Word of God remains with God, there being no other authority above Him to do so. But, it is another matter if it be the word of man, as H.J. Muller (The Uses of the Past) described it to be "The greatest single work that man has produced". Strictly speaking, God is not the author of these Gospels, nor did He actually execute the writing miraculously.

In order to be divine the Gospels must contain the whole truth and nothing but the truth. As we have discussed earlier, and will also present later, these are in fact a fascinating jumble of puzzles, contradictions, gaps, hints and suggestions. Discrepancies are numerous and extensive. We are then confronted with the situation where some parts of these Holy Scriptures seem to have undergone changes and thus rendered doubtful. Immediately the authenticity of these becomes questionable because the question arises as to which parts are genuine and which ones unauthentic and spurious.

Such is the canon which forms the foundation of the belief of the largest religion of the world. This is thus the evidence with which we must contend in order to prove, or disprove, whether Jesus, the Christ, died on the cross for the redemption of the sins of the mankind and whether or not he was the "Son of the Most Holy" by implication or by his own proclamation.

It is argued that the Gospels were written with the intention of inspiring belief. They may not be historically or factually correct but that is not of any particular significance as long as we get the spiritual message. This argument is not tenable. If we have to base our faith on some document then it better not be casual or it need not be taken seriously but rather casually as intended by the author himself.

Before we undertake any further analysis of the claims regarding the authenticity of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, let us point out that the "inspired" works of various Biblical books became "canon" only after these were so accepted by the groups of rabbis or churchmen. We are not aware of the basic rules which these pious people followed to determine what may be accepted as "Word of God". It is on the basis of these very rules that they may have rejected the claim of similar other documents which were then destroyed. The case of Apocrypha is indicative of the battle of recognition/canonization that still goes on even in our own time.

It is interesting to recall that various Gospels were extant in selective areas and some of the canonised documents were not available universally. John's Gospel was written no less than 70 years after Jesus' last discourse. It has a reference to the coming of a "Comforter". Paul himself seems to be unaware of this or he would have mentioned it in one of his Epistles. Readers of Mark and John must have been ignorant about the Lord's Prayer which is contained only in the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. Again Paul seems to be unaware of such a prayer. For 300 years "spurious" documents remained part of the Christian faith in many churches. For almost 1500 years "Apocrypha" was considered to be of the same level as other canon documents until Protestants decided to set it apart. For majority of Christians, mostly non-Protestants, it continues to be canon.

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

In defence of the Bible it is said that one need not apply scientific method to the contents of the Bible. Before arguing about this statement let us first understand what is implied by scientific method. Scientific method, however it is defined, is related to the measurement of phenomena and experimentation or repeated observation. To us this does not

totally bar itself for application to many factors quoted in the Bible. The whole world lives on expectation of events that repeatedly occur. Thus if in our observation we notice that when a person is hit head-on by a car going at 50 kilometer per hour in most likelihood that person will be killed. The probability of a person surviving such an accident, if they do, can be reasonably, scientifically, predicted, or to use the Biblical word, prophesied. If we know that an event is possible then we can give the benefit of doubt and say: Yes, it is probable; or that it could happen so. But when, to our understanding, let us say at the level of presently available scientific knowledge, we know an event to be impossible, then we are within our right to consider it improbable.

A believer may believe in something totally supernatural, impossible and improbable through blind faith or through reasoning of faith but how does one explain the phenomenon to someone who does not have the faith to start with? Faith does not have to be totally blind, there has to be some reasonable basis even to have faith.

When things become hard to explain the fundamentalists take cover behind "everything is possible for God". But can that be reason enough to accept that which obviously looks odd and unreasonable. After all our actions are geared to reasonable expectations. Laws of nature do not change. If they did there will be total chaos in the world. This fact has been known to mankind from time immemorial. Thales of Miletus (born circa 640 B.C.E.) systemised what we know as "the laws of nature" and concluded that the universe ran according to certain fixed rules and was not erratic in its working. Even Paul said that God is "not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33).

Thus to say that scientific method cannot be applied to the Bible is to admit that the contents of the Bible, or at least some of them, cannot stand the heat of reason.

LEGAL HISTORICAL METHOD

Once we have shown that an event is within the realm of possibility then we can use the legal-historical method to verify if it did actually happen. Thus if someone comes to us to say that he heard that a man just raised his arms and flew around in the sky then we can immediately suspect that this must be an April fool's joke or something like that. If this is said to have happened when we know that scientific ways exist to do that then we may not immediately reject the news knowing that such an act is possible. In such a case we may then proceed to verify the news and seek testimonies that can be corroborated and even check whether testimonies of certain persons could be accepted as true.

Even in a case where the narrator is said to be a person like Jesus himself we need to ask ourselves if the narration was correctly recorded and whether the event did actually happen or was it another of the parables Jesus was so fond of narrating; "in fact he never spoke to them without a parable" (MT 13:35). Take the case of the Good Samaritan. Was Jesus really referring to a particular person or was he just using an illustration to explain his point? He certainly was not proving a point by telling a cooked up lie.

Testimonies can be of three kinds: oral, written, or proofs or exhibits. In our discussions we shall try to show that the Bible fails the scrutiny of all these tests. Sometimes we cannot identify the witnesses, sometimes the authorship of documents is doubtful and sometimes the things are well beyond reason and point to the adoption of pagan myths. Bible cannot stand these tests even on the basis of its own internal consistency [for more details see the Appendices].

INFALLIBLE

"When we say that the Bible is verbally inspired (or inspired as to its actual words), we refer to the first time it was written down. We believe that it is infallible in its original manuscripts. Our critics are not slow to ask us: Where are the original manuscripts today?, and we must confess that we do not know. For some reason God has not seen fit to preserve them to man, probably to prevent him from worshipping them". This seems a lame argument. In some religions people even today have access to what they consider the ancient relics, yet it is nowhere thought necessary that these relics must be worshiped. If God in His wisdom decided not to preserve some parts of the Scriptures then it must be that He did not consider them worthy of preservation. When Isaiah tells us "Word of God shall stand for ever" (Isa 40:8) he is not implying "except for the lost part". If it is the Word of God then He takes care to preserve it. The fact that the original manuscripts have not survived points to the fact that God did not consider it fit that these should survive. The fallibility of Bible does not, however, hinge on the non-existence of the original documents: It is based on the mistakes within the narration within the Bible itself, contradictory statements, known interpolations, etc. [see the Appendices].

MINOR MISTAKES

"New Testament manuscript discoveries exhibit a reassuring general consistency.....on the whole errors and textual variations are relatively minor and the canonical gospels can be judged to be very much as their authors wrote them". Let us start the analysis of this statement by asking what if through sheer stroke of luck or divine action we find the very original manuscript of the Gospel attributed to John written in author's own hand? Would that be enough for us to accept that its contents are true? We shall still need to verify which "John" is the author of this Gospel even if he was named John. We would check his own credentials for writing what we are to accept as an "inspired" Gospel. If it is really John, "the beloved disciple" and if he is also the author of the First Letter of John, then why does he say: "What we have seen and heard" (1 Jn 1:3)? If he is the one as assumed then he is supposed to be a witness himself, or so we are told, then why does he rely on what he "heard"?

As for consistency, we have already pointed out earlier in this chapter that Matthew and Luke disagree on the exact wording of such an important teaching of Jesus as the Lord's Prayer. We do not have a list of names of the twelve Apostles that is agreed between the four Gospels, as we shall see in Chapter XI. How can one have any reliance on matters less obvious or more complicated than these?

Legal experts tell us that when a document has mistakes, reliability of the whole document is affected. According to Jesus "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (LK 16:10,17). Those who have conveyed the "Word of God" to us have not been careful to pass the correct words. If they have not been faithful in small things then they cannot be expected to be faithful in major doctrinal texts. Isaiah never said "The Word of God lives for ever, except for minor mistakes!"

PURITY

"A marked feature of the Bible is its purity, as contrasted with the writings of other religions. Not only does it inculcate the highest moral standards, but when it describes sin it makes it appear loathsome and repulsive". Those who make this claim do not seem to have studied the books of other religions. Just take for example the Hindu holy book, The Bhagwad

Gita, or the Muslim holy book the Quran and compare their purity with that of the Bible. One has to read Ezekiel Chapter 7 to see how lustfully has the sin been described. The glorification of the annihilation of the vanquished in the book of Joshua and pleasure in its fierceness and cruelty should be no boast for any holy book, let alone an inspired one. Bible does not provide a moral and ethical basis for "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men".

TRANSLATABILITY

"No other book can be translated with such facility and clarity into other languages as the Bible". One has only to read the Prefaces of some of the modern translations to ignore this claim. Some quotations in the earlier part of this book speak for themselves. The following quotation is also illuminating: "All through the centuries, theologians and biblical scholars have been plagued by problems of translation — or, to be more accurate, mistranslation. By the time a name, a word, a phrase, a sentence, a statement has passed from spoken Hebrew or Aramaic, to written Greek, to written Latin, and then to one or another modern language, it has often become utterly divorced from its original meaning. Most biblical scholarship involves some degree of speculation. So, for that matter, do theology and the teachings of the churches. But while historical research speculates on the basis of historical fact, theology and clerical teachings speculate almost entirely on the scriptures themselves — often without any relation to historical fact*.

"People have argued, have slaughtered each other, have waged wars throughout the course of the last two thousand years over the way in which particular passages should be understood. In the coalescence of Christian tradition there is one principle that has remained constant. In the past, when Church Fathers or other individuals were confronted with one of the various biblical ambiguities and contradictions, they speculated about its meaning. They attempted to interpret it. Once accepted, the conclusion of their speculation — that is, interpretation — would become enshrined in dogma. Over the centuries, it then came to be regarded as established fact. Such conclusions are not fact at all. On the contrary, they are speculations and interpretations congealed into a tradition, and it is this tradition which is constantly mistaken for fact.

"We must, necessarily, interpret language — words are imbued with a meaning which can often be affected by context, culture and history, all of which are subject to change. We think we know what certain words mean, but the assumption can be dangerous. It is especially so when we try to impose our twentieth century interpretation upon a word which once conveyed a subtly, or dramatically, different meaning in the past. Even more dangerous is it when we insist that a man of two thousand year ago meant what we mean in so contentiously abstract a sphere as religious faith. Many of our contemporary attitudes to or our beliefs about Jesus stem from interpretation — or misinterpretation — of biblical material. And biblical material is composed of words (themselves translations of other words) which attempt to convey ideas". (Michael Baigent, et. al. : The Messianic Legacy, pp. 22).

* It is interesting to know that in the case of translation and interpretation of the Holy Quran, from its original Arabic text, scholars take great pains to record as to under what circumstances a particular verse(s) was revealed, if there was any explanation by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Blessings and peace be upon him) himself, how his own companions and contemporaries etc., interpreted it.

Unfortunately, for the Bible such scholarship is not possible because, not to speak of the supporting material, the very authenticity of the biblical material is by itself doubtful. According to Prof. Rudolf Bultmann of the University of Marburg, Germany, a famous Protestant theologian: "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary".

PRESERVABILITY

The manner in which Bible has been preserved is a miracle in itself". Those who make this claim are blatantly ignoring many facts about the dubiousness of their claim which, surprisingly, should also be known to them. They point out that over 20,000 copies of New Testament manuscripts are in existence today. Yet they ignore to mention that NO TWO MANUSCRIPTS ARE EXACTLY SIMILAR which means that there are 20,000 different versions of the New Testament!

"The original manuscripts of the Bible books, called 'Autographs' by scholars, perished through use or decay. Today we have only copies, far removed in time. The original manuscripts by hand were often repeated by other scribes. As a result, there are an estimated 200,000 variant readings in the New Testament. However, most of them are strictly grammatical and are spread throughout some 5,300 manuscripts. The differences generally trivial affect only 10,000 New Testament places. 'This would leave a text 98.33 per cent pure', American biblical scholar Norman L. Geisler says, 'Regardless of the manuscript, John Kohlenberger, author of Words About The Word, points out "The message of the Bible is absolutely preserved'. Dr. Geisler assures us it comes through 100 per cent" (The Plain Truth magazine May/June 1993, pp. 28).

The above statement overlooks the fact that the New Testament (as also the Old Testament) consists of purposely selected documents acceptable to a particular sect of "Christianity" at the time of its compilation and, besides the known corruptions, it has many indeterminable corruptions and interpolations not covered by the above acknowledged scribal errors. Rather than be exhilarated at what has been left of the "original" Bible revelation/inspiration, the matter to be really pondered is that, inspite of it having been considered holy and sacred, how much of it has been lost or changed! If it was Homer's Iliad or Plato's Republic, it will be indeed a marvel but for a holy book not to have survived intact is indeed a matter of regret and consideration why God in his wisdom wished some of its parts to be lost for ever!

NO CONTRADICTIONS

"We would be sure that a Book from God would have no contradictions, mistakes, or anything that would violate human reason. On this last point, the Book might have many things higher than human reason, but nothing that would make it impossible for a truly sincere person to believe".

We dare say that the Bible abounds in contradictions. Just one example: Luke tells us that Jesus told his disciples "Tarry ye in Jerusalem" and that they indeed did so after his "ascension". Yet both Matthew and John tell us that they went to Galilee. Some more obvious contradictions are given in the Appendices.

On the point of belief by a sincere person, let us point out that the word Trinity does not appear anywhere in the Bible itself and that the concept of Trinity remains very ambiguous even to pious and sincere Christians. In fact the debate between opposing proponents was going on more than three hundred years after Jesus until those against this concept were forcefully crushed when Christianity became a State religion. Furthermore, "it is possible to be both sincere and wrong" (Josh McDowell: More than A Carpenter, pp.30).

UNITY

"One of the most striking proofs of the Bible's inspiration is its unity. If it had been written by one man over the space of a few years, then the fact that the individual chapters

should unite in forming one complete story would not be at all striking but consider the simple facts concerning the writing of the Bible. The sixty-six books were written by at least forty different men. These men did not all live at the same time or place, so there could have been no collaboration between them...The Scriptures combine to tell one complete story with an undeniable unity throughout'.

The above long quotation is based on a very serious misconception: It assumes that the sixty six books were written independent of each other and only these sixty six have ever been written! The facts of the case have already been stated in Chapter I of this book. The Bible is a book of anthology of purposely selected books. It is an anthology just like any of the other anthologies. Having been purposely selected the theme is that which was decided by those who selected these books. In fact there are even today disagreements as to which books should or should not be part of the Bible. There is in fact no basis for the selection of these books except that certain Jewish Rabbis or Christian churchmen favoured some books over others.

APPLICABILITY TO ALL TIMES

"The Bible never goes out of date and its message is written in terms that are suitable for all ages.....It speaks to all races and cultures.....new truths continually appear from its pages".

The same can be said of the Bhagwad Gita or The Quran, and perhaps even a large number of ancient Greek classics. On the other hand the main audience of the Bible are the Jews; the concession to the Gentiles is Paul's fabrication. It does not concern itself with any other group of people. It presents a narrow point of view. Even for the future, the Bible keeps its hope on the righteous Jewish remnant.

HISTORICITY

"Most people accept the authenticity of Iliad and its authorship by Homer. It has 643 manuscripts of differing dates that are available to us. Aristotle wrote his poetics around 343 B.C. Yet the earliest copy we have is dated 1100 C.E., nearly a 1,400-year gap, and only five manuscripts are in existence. Over 20,000 copies of New Testament manuscripts are in existence today, yet its authenticity is being challenged".

We do not know if this remark is made as a sign of naivette or deliberate misrepresentation. Some clarifications will be in order. Firstly, the claim regarding "over 20,000 copies of New Testament manuscripts" is made knowing fully well that these are not 20,000 manuscripts of complete New Testament. It only means 20,000 fragments or parts, or books. Numbers are not important. What really matters is whether these fragments have been truly copied from "originals" (which no more exist!), whether there are any missing (deliberately destroyed) versions, etc. Availability of just one authentic document is better than 20,000 fragments whose authenticity is doubtful. Secondly, it is not of much importance whether Homer wrote Iliad or its author was Plato. It also does not matter, besides the scientific curiosity for which purpose several expeditions have been launched, whether the events recorded there-in did indeed occur or if they are pure fiction. In the case of the New Testament the claim is made of their being "inspired" and it is this claim that makes us careful in verifying every book, every chapter, every sentence of the New Testament. Drop that claim and our scrutiny will be of not more than of academic interest.

What if we are able to lay our hand by divine intervention on the very first copy of a letter written by Jesus to Herod the Tetrarch made, and accepted to have been so written by John "the beloved disciple" and at the end of which John writes: "And it is he who has seen

this letter being written by the Lord in his own handwriting and he showed it to the disciple he loved who in turn made a copy therefrom in his own hand and it is he himself who bears witness that he has seen the letter in original and it is he who made a copy most diligently and with due reverence to the words of the Word that is God". Now if this letter contained a small sentence "And take ye heed that I am the Supreme God, and the Father and the Holy Spirit pay homage to me all the time and with great reverence and bless the day they were created". We are sure that all Christians will insist that it must have been a copying error by John who may have made this copy after a good supper topped with wine. They might even challenge whether this is indeed an authentic manuscript or a forgery. They might even question whether Jesus indeed wrote any such letter which is not mentioned in any of the most authentic manuscripts.

The believers must give the same privilege of sincere doubt where it is so warranted. Unfortunately, there is much in the Bible that calls for verification and which fails under normal scrutiny. Indeed on close examination we find that in a number of cases many of the events recorded in various books of the Bible are historically incorrect. For example, the creation of vegetation (Gen 1:12) before even the creation of "evening and morning" (1:13) which happened before the creation of "Sun and light" (1:14) is a glaring example of illogical narration. The first two sons born to Adam, Able and Cain, are stated to be "keeper of sheep" and "tiller of ground" (Gen 4:2). This skips thousands of years of human development. Various books of the Bible abound in such historical mis-statements. The classical case is dating the creation to no earlier than about 4000 B.C. which is contrary to all scientific knowledge. However, fundamentalists insist that scientific knowledge is incorrect. The following entry in the Encyclopedia Britannica, Second edition (1777-83) is illuminating:

"Concerning the number of years which have elapsed since the creation of the world, there have been many disputes. The compilers of the Universal History determine it to have taken place in the year 4305 B.C. so that, according to them, the world is now in the 6096th year of its age. Others think it was created only 4000 years B.C. so that it hath not yet attained its 6000th year. Be this as it will, however, the whole account of the creation rests on the truth of the Mosaic history; and which we must of necessity accept, because we can find no other which does not either abound with the grossest absurdities, or lead us into absolute darkness. The Chinese and Egyptian pretensions to antiquity are so absurd and ridiculous, that the bare reading must be a sufficient confutation of them to every reasonable person. Some historians and philosophers are inclined to discredit the Mosaic accounts from the appearances of volcanoes, and other natural phenomena: but their objections are by no means sufficient to invalidate the authority of the sacred writings; not to mention that every one of their own systems is liable to insuperable objections. It is therefore reasonable for every person to accept the Mosaic account of the creation as truth: but an historian is under an absolute necessity of doing it, because, without it, he is quite destitute of any standard or scale by which he might reduce the chronology of different nations to any agreement; and, in short, without receiving this account as true, it would be in a manner impossible at this day to write a general history of the world."

By now the world has already discarded such an approach.

The claim of Bible being historically correct is untenable. It has been compiled with a certain point of view. In recording history the mostly unknown writers have been subjective. In the story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son, for example it is recorded that God said to Abraham: "Take now thy son thy only son ... and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Gen 22:2).

According to this Book of Moses this "only son" was Isaac. However, it overlooks the fact that Ishmael was Abraham's eldest son and if the sacrifice was to be made of the "only son" then it had to be Ishmael. However one may argue, at no time during Abraham's life was Isaac his "only son" as they both survived their father. The biblical account of Ishmael's mother Hagar being left in the wilderness of Paran (Gen. Ch. 21) and finding a spring of water there is otherwise similar to the one known to the Arabs for centuries. Arabs always knew that it was Ishmael who was indeed offered as sacrifice. It seems those who wrote Genesis changed the story to enhance the image of the "chosen people".

It is interesting that if God really wanted to test Abraham's faith then He would not have taken him into confidence that a lamb would be provided in place of Isaac at the last minute (Gen 22:8). Isaac is also made to look unaware of his impending sacrifice and is thus not a willing partner in the ritual. On the other hand the Arab story of Abraham proceeding with the sacrifice with full knowledge and acceptance of Ishmael is more reasonable and therefore likely to be historically correct.

This is not the only incidence in the Bible where history has been played with. Let us now take up the appointment of Saul as king of Israel by Samuel the prophet. In I Sam we are told that after a war with the Israelites "the Philistines took the ark of God" (5:1) and that "the ark of the God was in the country of Philistines seven months" (6:1). Philistines experienced several plagues [as happened to Pharaoh's people in Egypt] so that in awe they put the ark on a cow-driven cart and sent it over to the Israelites (ch.6). The ark was brought to Kir-jath-je-a-rim where "it was twenty years and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord" (I Sam 7:2). It is during (or after) this period that they asked Samuel to appoint a king over them (I Sam 8:5). His choice fell on Saul who fought many battles with the Philistines and defeated them. In one of such battles David killed Goliath the Philistine.

It can be reasonably suspected that history has been twisted. It would make better sense if after the ark was taken by the Philistines the people sought a king who was able to unite the Israelites and defeat the Philistines and bring back the ark. People would not have lamented for twenty years while the ark was with them, but rather when the ark was with the Philistines.

Although the Israelite considered themselves to be God's "chosen people" they were never a great nation even under king David and Solomon. Over their history they subdued small nations on their borders but not too far beyond. On the other hand they were run over by Assyrian, Chaldeans, Greeks, Persians, Egyptians and Romans. They were at odds between their own Northern and Southern kingdoms. It is only by twisting the history that they could maintain the false image of their glorious past.

Historical facts are supposed to be recorded plainly. Bible not only twists its history it exaggerates. Thus, according to Luke "there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed" (2:1) and "all went to be taxed" (2:3). The fact is that if there was indeed any taxation then it could only be in the areas directly controlled by the Romans. Galilee, where Nazareth was located and where Jesus' parents are supposed to have been living, did not fall under Roman jurisdiction and no direct taxation could be levied by the Romans. But how else could Luke fulfill a prophecy or two except by twisting the facts and exaggeration?

According to Mark, when John the Baptist was carrying out his mission along the river Jordan "there went out unto him all the land of judaea, and they of Jerusalem and were all baptized of him" (1:5). Clearly a fantastic claim. According to Matthew "Jesus went about all Galilee ... healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people ... and

they brought unto him all sick people ... and he healed them(4:23-24). Yet he was not successful in his own hometown(MK 6:4). Matthew also tells the story of two who were "possessed with devils"(8:28) after Jesus rebuked the devils in them, the devils went into a herd of swine and jumped into the sea and were drowned(8:32). This happened in the country of Ger-gesenes(KJV)/Cadarenes(NIV, NWT). According to Mark(5:1) and Luke(8:26-27) this happened in Gad-a-renes and only one devil-possessed man was involved. Many aspects of this story need consideration. Firstly, Matthew, as in a number of other cases, is fond of playing with number two which is the number of witnesses required to prove a case. Secondly, it is questionable if someone in the vicinity would be owning a large herd of swines, Jews as well as Samaritans obeyed the Mosaic prohibition on eating pork. So why would someone keep such a herd? Even if someone did, the story is unbelievable for its location — Gedara/Gedarenes was located six miles from the sea. Gerasa/Gerasenes/Gergasenes was located about thirty miles south-east of Galilee with no large body of water nearby. What a fantastic jump did the swine make! or, did they?

"At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn, and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day"(MT 12:1-2). What were the Pharisees themselves doing in the field on the Sabbath day?

Bible abounds in such incidences which are doubtful, exaggerated, invented, manipulated, twisted and not true to history.

Let us now examine the correctness of the "historical event" of David killing Goliath:

I Sam(17:50): David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

II Sam(21:16-17): And Ish'bi-be'nob, which was of the sons of the giant, ... But A-bish'a-i the son of Zer-u-i' succoured him and smote the Philistine, and killed him.

II Sam(21:18): ... there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gab: then Sib'be-chai the Hu'shath-ite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.

II Sam(21:19): In another battle with the Philistines at Gab, Elhannan son of Jaare-Orezim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath, the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

II Sam(21:20): In still another battle, which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot — twenty four in all. He also was descended from Rapha. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimeah, David's brother, killed him.

I Chr(21:5): In another battle with the Philistines, Elhannan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

I Chr(21:6-7): In still another battle which took place at Gath, there was a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot — twenty four in all. He also was descended from Rapha. When he taunted Israel, Jonathan, son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.

Now we have four men who killed a huge man (or men?). Were these three (or four) different men who were killed or was it the same person? II Sam(21:22) tells us that four different men were killed by David or his men. I Sam(17:50) says that David killed Goliath but II Sam(21:19) says that Elhannan killed Goliath. This seems to be the same Goliath who was the "Champion of the Philistines .. his spear was like a weaver's rod"(I Sam 17:4, 7)

It is noteworthy that while David had been the armor-bearer and harpist to king Saul (I Sam 16: 21, 23), King Saul seems to be ignorant about him in the battle-field(I Sam 17: 55-58) even though he had also prepared him for the battle in his own tunic(I Sam 17:38). It is also surprising that for forty days the Philistine army faced the Israelite in the battle field, on

each day Goliath would go out and challenge and taunt the Israelites, yet no battle is joined neither by the Israelites who are said to have been (understandably) in terror of Goliath nor by the Philistines who had no reason not to attack the now terrified enemy.

After David killed Goliath he "took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent" (I Sam 17:54). While combining various episodes the retouchers made an elementary historical blunder. Jerusalem was not part of Saul's kingdom whose capital was Gibeath in Judah. Jerusalem was annexed by David himself seven years after Saul's death. It may also be pointed out that realising the mistake about Goliath in II Sam (21:19), KJV has interpolated "the brother of Goliath" in the text although the modern translations do not insert this.

"Modern Biblical scholars, however, are convinced that it was not David who killed Goliath at all and it may possibly have been someone called Elhannan — Original reports of Elhannan's victory over Goliath were probably written about 950 B.C. and the story of David and Goliath about 580 B.C. — more than 350 years later" (Manfred Barthel: What the Bible Says). Scholars have been quite skeptic about the story of David and the exact period of occurrence so much so that in the process many a learned persons have wondered if the whole story was a mere folklore and if indeed there was a king David! Their quest has brought out interesting details, which shows the confusion about the biblical history.

The word "davium", as deciphered from cuneiform tablets of the city archives of Mari is considered to be not a personal name but a military rank/title, something like "generalissimo" or "Commander-in-chief" (Werner Keller: The Bible As History). This perplexed scholars until 1978 when the scholars determined that "davium" actually meant "a rout, a disastrous defeat". The historical David remains as elusive as ever, whether David indeed killed Goliath or not is another matter. The Biblical account is most confounding. Even if Bible contained true history, that itself would make it another of the historical books which are any way not expected to be inspired.

"Many people still [do] not know the extent to which, for example, the Gospels contradict each other. Or that there are Gospels other than those in the New Testament, which were more or less arbitrarily excluded from the canon by councils composed of eminently mortal, eminently fallible men. Or that Jesus' divinity had been decided by vote at the Council of Nicaea, some three centuries after Jesus himself had lived.... There are still people in Britain who can ascribe a fire caused by lightning in York to God's wrath at the appointment of a somewhat outspoken bishop as if, amid the violence, hatred, prejudice, insensitivity and menace of the modern world, God had nothing more pressing on His mind, nothing better to do with his resources. And there are still people who can shout blasphemy or heresy and demand the same bishop's resignation when he makes so self-evident, common-sense a statement as that Resurrection cannot be definitively 'proved'.

"We do not specifically know if Jesus was indeed married or not. Because the Gospels do not say anything about his having a wife, it is assumed that he did not marry, which was unusual for a man of his age. It is plausibly speculated by many research workers that the marriage at Cana (JN 2:1) was perhaps his own. Otherwise his mother's concern about the host having no wine is not very relevant. He may not really have been married but we can never be sure.

"The great mass of believing Christians in fact know less about the figure they worship than about historical figures of far less relevance. In the past, when such knowledge was inaccessible or dangerous to promulgate, there might have been some justification. The knowledge today is both accessible and safely promulgated. Yet the practicing Christian

remains as ignorant as his predecessors of centuries ago; and he subscribes essentially to the same simplistic accounts he heard when he himself was a child... the prevailing ignorance of New Testament scholarship is in large part the fault of the churches themselves and of the ecclesiastical establishment. Anyone in the ministry, anyone training for the ministry, is, as a matter of course, confronted with the latest developments in biblical research... Yet this knowledge has not been passed on to the laity" (Michael Baigent, et. al: *The Messianic Legacy*).

CLOSENESS TO EVENTS

"The books of the New Testament were written soon after the events. This closeness to the recorded accounts is an extremely effective means of certifying the accuracy of what is retained by the witness. The historian, however, also has to deal with the eye-witness who consciously or unconsciously tells false-hoods even though he is near to the event and is competent to tell the truth. The New Testament accounts of Christ were being circulated within the lifetime of those alive at the time of his life. These people could certainly confirm or deny the accuracy of the accounts. In advocating their case for the gospel, the apostles had appealed (even when confronting their most severe opponents) to common knowledge concerning Jesus. They not only said, "Look, we saw this", or "We heard that"...but they turned the tables around and right in front of adverse critics and said, "You also know about these things...You saw them: You yourselves know about it" (Josh McDowell: *More than A Carpenter*).

We have cited the above quotation because we would like to expose these blatant misrepresentation right from the New Testament itself. Firstly, it is wrong to say that the apostles saw everything themselves and recorded it themselves. No one today needs to contest seriously that the Gospel According to John was actually not written by someone known by the name of John who was also supposed to be present at the Last Supper. At best the authorship remains questionable. There is very little in the New Testament that is written by the original Apostles and whatever is attributed to them is of doubtful authorship.

It is also incorrect to say that the Apostles themselves were witnesses to the main event of the drama, the crucifixion of Jesus. None of them was there! They left their Lord and Master at the Garden of Gethsemane: "They all forsook him, and fled" (MT 26:56). If the Apostles themselves could not vouch for themselves how could they turn the tables on their adversaries? In any case the testimony of the critics would obviously have been as Matthew put it: "His disciples came by night, and stole him away....this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (MT 28:13-15). It is known that Paul himself was present in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' crucifixion but hardly knew about it. The Gospels present only a one-sided picture, and even that side of the picture is deliberately tainted.

Very few people in those early days could read. Dissemination of information was difficult. Writing was a luxury not available or even economically feasible for the common man. Long distances and difficult communication system made it difficult to convey the news, or the worst, to verify it. Large-scale prevalence of superstition made it a fertile ground for the development and acceptance of myths. Under such conditions anything could be said and not only be accepted but snowballed since myths have the tendency to snowball.

For general interest given below is what may be considered by most Christians a reasonable chronology of various books of the New Testament together with what New World Translation gives as its own estimate:

Independent Estimates		NWT Books	Events
CE	50	50,51	Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians
	55	50-52	Paul's Epistle to the Galatians
	56	55	Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians (I & II)
	58	56	Paul's Epistle to the Romans
	62	60-61	Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
		60-61	Paul's Epistle to the Philippians
		60-61	Paul's Epistle to the Colossians
		60-61	Paul's Epistle to Philemon
	65	61-64	Paul's Epistle to Timothy (I)
		61-64	Paul's Epistle to Titus
	67	65	Paul's Epistle to Timothy (II)
	70	60-65	Gospel of Mark
	75	41	Gospel of Matthew
	80	56-58	Gospel of Luke
	85	61	Acts of the Apostles
	90	Before 62	Epistle of James
		62-64	Epistles of Peter (I & II)
		98	Epistles of John (I, II and III)
		65	Epistle of Jude
	95	96	Apocalypse of John/Revelation
	100	98	Gospel of John
Important events:			James executed AD 62
			Peter executed AD 64
			Paul executed AD 67 (Some say AD 64).

If one studies Paul's epistles to find out his knowledge about Jesus or his life then one is amazed how little he seems to know about his Lord Christ. He is not concerned with Mary and seems to be unaware of the concept of "virgin birth"; at least that is what we discern from his epistles (did he take it as an accepted fact?). He does not even concern himself with Jesus. His main theme is his doctrine. Accepting Luke's estimate that Jesus was of thirty years old when he started his mission (LK 3:23), Jesus may have been "crucified" at the age of 31 as implied in the Synoptic Gospels or at the age of 33 according to John's extended narration. The earliest Gospel therefore was written, according to Christian estimates, not earlier than 37 years after Jesus' "ascension" far away from Galilee or Jerusalem or wherever. It must have taken a few more years for it to be copied and become extant. Many who had any knowledge of Jesus were already dead by then!

Whatever is in the New Testament is not all that was recorded and was extant and being read in the churches in various countries. Sometimes what was being read in one area was completely unknown in another area. It was more than three centuries after Jesus that under state control some of the documents were canonised. The selection was by human acceptance, which also rejected all dissenting documents authorising their destruction under pain of death. History was decided by human choice and whims. Hundreds of thousands perished in defence of their manuscripts and beliefs. It cannot be denied that even the present canon was edited and revised.

No Sir, the New Testament books do not pass the conditions we normally prescribe to ordinary news even in our own days.

DIVINE ORIGIN/WORD OF GOD

Let us start by saying that there are many things in the Bible which are good and godly. There are many injunctions on living a righteous life and this must be according to God's wish. But most of these are common to ALL religions of the world. Even the primitive man believed in most of these good precepts whether or not he had a religion or believed or not in the Great Spirit. So let us give credit to the Bible that it contains some words of God. But that is where we have to stop. Our analysis in Chapter 1 has already shown the moving hand of time changing the words of the Bible.

When some document is presented to us with the remark that "it is from God" our first reaction would be "Does the document or its author say so?" There are very few books in the Bible where such a claim has been made by the author. We shall only show some claims within the Bible including where the author specifically states that what he was writing was NOT the word of God.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"(Gen 1:1). "And the Lord God formed man"(Gen 2:7). "And the Lord said unto Noah"(Gen 7:1). "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain"(Gen 16:7). "And the Lord appeared to him"(Gen 18:1). "Then the Lord said unto Moscs"(Ex 6:1). Such narrations indicate that the words are clearly not those of God himself. Even the most rigid of the fundamentalists now believe that "moved by the Spirit of God holy men wrote"(II Pet 1:21), that is, these books were written by men who were "inspired". This does not necessarily mean that these were the actual divine words.

There are, however, claims in the Bible that what is being said is that which was revealed: "The word of God came to me, saying..."(Jere 1:2,4). "Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth"(Jere 1:9). "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying..."(Eze 23:1). "And he said to me, Son of Man..." (Eze 2:1). "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you..." (Amos 3:1). "The word of God that came to Micah" (Mic 1:1), etc. Sometimes the revelation was indirect: "The vision of Isaiah..." (Isa 1:1). "The vision of Obediah, thus saith the Lord God..." (Oba 1:1).

Paul claims: "I am a missionary to the Gentiles"(Rom 11:13). "Paul, Apostle of Jesus Christ" (I Cor 1:1). "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ"(Gal 1:11,12). "What I write has the Lord as its authority"(I Cor 14:37). "I have been entrusted with the Gospel for Gentiles as surely as Peter had been entrusted with the Gospel for Jews. For God whose action made Peter an Apostle for the Jews also made me an Apostle for the Gentiles"(Gal 2:7). He gives no specific instance how and where he got this authority. He boasts of "visions and revelations granted by the Lord" but does not tell us what he saw or was told. In fact at several places he specifically disavows divine inspiration: "as my own word, not Lord's...it is my opinion"(I Cor 7:12,26). "On the question of celibacy I have no instructions from the Lord, but I give my judgment"....."It is my aim....." It is my opinion"(I Cor 7:25,28,40). "I speak not by commandment....my advice..."(I Cor 8:8,10). "I am not speaking here as a Christian but like a fool....I speak as a fool"(II Cor 11:17,21). Foolishness, obviously, cannot have divine sanction.

Paul in his Letter to Titus states: "It was a Cretan himself, one of their own prophets, who spoke the truth when he said, Cretans are always liars, wicked beasts and lazy gluttons"(Tit 1:12,13). Let us overlook the inspired wholesale condemnation of an entire group of people, men, women and children, young and old, good or bad. This statement made by Paul has come to be known as "Epimenides' Paradox". Epimenides, of Cnossos of Crete, lived circa 600 B.C.E. and is said to have also stated: "Lack of wild beasts on the island of Crete was supposed

by the Cretans themselves". Epimenides was himself a Cretan and thus according to the statement, all Cretans being liars, he too was lying and Paul did not have to quote him if he was really writing an inspired document. If Epimenides was telling a truth then for once a Cretan was not a liar and the statement, inspired or otherwise, is not correct and this reflects adversely on this book of the New Testament and for once this book does not belong in the Word of God.

JESUS AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

It is often remarked that "the accuracy of the Bible is attested by the Lord Jesus Himself". Even if we agree, for the sake of the argument, that Jesus himself attested to the authenticity of "the Bible" this testimony would apply only to "the Law and the Prophets" as the remaining parts of the Old Testament had not yet been canonized and the New Testament was not yet in the making. On that basis we could assert that Jesus did not sanctify anything else nor did he abrogate anything that is in the Law and the Prophets and these do not mention any propitiatory or substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus for the atonement of sins and salvation of those who believed in him. Every one must carry his own cross, according to Jesus himself, if indeed he is quoted properly.

When Jesus entered the Temple and turned over the tables of the money-changers and others, he was certainly not endorsing whatever was going on. According to Mark "he began to teach and said: It is written in the Scriptures that God said that My Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations. But you have turned it into a hideout for thieves"(MK 11:17). Thus, while he may have meant that the Scriptures contained the words of God, it does not necessarily mean that he accepted that the existing Scriptures themselves had divine origin, word by word, a certificate which Old Testament does not give to itself as we have observed in Chapter I ante. Matthew(21:13) and Luke(19:46) also do not give any other impression. In fact we can question the authenticity of whatever is attributed to him: "did he really say that?" For example, did Jesus really say that Abraham did not tell the truth: "now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham"(JN 7:40)? Or, did Jesus really say "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers(JN 7:8)"? which would be a complete denial of "the Law and the Prophets" and a wholesale condemnation of all prophets and holy men.

It may be recalled that Jesus did not understand the Greek language and therefore did not read the Septuagint. The Hebrew Bible(The Tanach) was canonised around 100 C.E. at Jamnia long after Jesus had "ascended to Heaven" and does not contain the Apocrypha. Christians among themselves do not agree on what really constitutes "Old Testament". How do we ascertain if Jesus really accepted any of these odd collections?

If Jesus fully accepted the Old Testament(The Law and the Prophets) and did not call for a change, then he was placing himself subservient to Moses....the New Testament, then, has no basis, especially Paul's rhetoric concerning abrogation of the Law. If Jesus was declaring what Paul preaches then he must have been teaching against the authenticity of the Old Testament or at least some of it. Yet we do not find any such teaching ascribed to in the New Testament, bringing doubts on both the New Testament as well as the Old Testament at least as far as the Christians are concerned.

According to John, at the "farewell discourse" Jesus told his close disciples "I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear"(JN 16:12). Did he mean to tell them that they were not yet ready to be told that the "Holy Scriptures" in their present

form were really not divine? The final truth about God was to be revealed by the Spirit of Truth and the quality of this message(JN 16:13-15) was to be:

1. He will lead you into all the truth
2. He will not speak on his own authority but he will speak what he hears
3. He will tell of the things to come
4. He will give me glory.

The Christians tell us that by the Spirit of Truth is meant the Holy Spirit which came to the Apostles at the time of the Pentecost ten days after Jesus had ascended to heaven(Acts 2:4). According to John(20:22) the Holy Spirit had actually been given to them by Jesus before he ascended to heaven. Whenever it happened, the New Testament does not record anything the Holy Spirit did to the disciples with regards to the tasks enumerated above. According to Acts(1:5) the disciples were only to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, to "receive power" and to "bear witness"(Acts 1:8). Nothing else. We are also unaware if Paul also received this Holy Spirit. This leads the field open. The Spirit of Truth must then be someone else who would be coming later with an entirely new revelation directly from God. This must, however, be discussed separately from the present topic.

We believe that Jesus was aware of the pollution of the "Sacred Scripture" for he must have known that: "I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live. And I polluted them in their own gifts.....in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me"(Eze 20:25-27). One should not imagine that God gave bad commandments but rather that the Jews polluted the gifts given to them through prophecy. God may test but he does not tempt: "God is untouched by evil, and does not himself tempt anyone. Temptation arises when a man is enticed and lured away by his own lust; then lust conceives and gives birth to sin"(Jas 1:13-15). Jesus must have recognised it. He did not have time to bring about the required change. Someone else was then to come with a Divine Revelation to bring light to the world.

FULFILLED PROPHECY

A "Prophet" is a person who tells what will happen in future or preaches what he thinks has been revealed to him. "Prophecy" is a foretelling of future events.

The biggest claim to the authenticity of the Bible that is made by most evangelists is the fulfillment of prophetic words contained in the Bible. Even if all the possible prophecies contained within the pages of Bible were manifestly fulfilled that would at best only prove that the text of the prophecy was true. It will still need to be argued whether everything other than these prophetic words was also true or not.

Israel had great prophets like Moses, Aaron, Isaiah, Ezekiel and the like. Some kings like David and Solomon were also considered to have been prophets. However, there were lesser prophets 'a penny a dozen' in almost all times of Jewish history. Obadiah had a hundred prophets hid in a cave(I Kg 18:4). Prophet Elijah had even established "schools for prophets" at Bethel as well as at Jericho(II Kg Ch.2). When Mary and Joseph took infant Jesus to the Temple after purification there was the prophetess Anna who announced the arrival of the Liberator "to all those who were looking for the liberation of Jerusalem"(LK 2:38) [Unfortunately instead of liberation it was destruction that lay ahead]. There was at that moment another man called Simeon to whom the Holy Spirit had revealed that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Messiah(LK 2:26). Philip had four daughters who possessed the gift of prophecy(Acts 21:9). There was also a prophet named Agabus at Caesarea who warned Paul that if he goes to Jerusalem he will be bound up by the Jews(Acts 21:10). Even

a slave girl was possessed by a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16). In Corinth almost all the congregation was using ecstatic utterances and Paul in his 1 Corinthian Epistle had to advise them to "prophecy, one at a time" (14:31). Barsabbas and Silas, the ones sent as emissaries of the Apostles at Jerusalem to the converts at Antioch, are said to be prophets in their own right (Acts 15:32). John asserts that even the High Priest of Caiaphas had the power of prophesying: "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spoke he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied..." (JN 11:49-51).

Paul gave symbolic meanings to various verses in the Old Testament. This practice was increasingly followed by those who wrote the Gospels and the Acts. They sought out verses which could have the slightest chance of being interpreted and quoted these through the mouths of various people. They seem to be seeking significance out of trivial matters and quoted a "prophecy" here and there, necessarily or otherwise, in their own narrations just to emphasise that everything had been foretold. In their enthusiasm to quote a prophecy, any prophecy, they even twisted the meanings, for example, a 'virgin' giving birth. They concocted events: Jesus' birth at Bethlehem or flight to Egypt. They made prophecy after the event: desolation of Jerusalem and famine in Judaea. They made Jesus act as if forcing the prophecy to be fulfilled, such as elaborate arrangements for his entering Jerusalem on an ass. They even misquoted: thirty silver pieces for the Potter's Field (MT 27:10). They invented prophecy where none existed: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" which prophecy was quoted by Nathaniel (JN 1:46) but does not exist in the Bible. There is even doubt if Nazareth indeed existed at that time. There were even contradicting prophecies: John (7:27) tells us that no one knows where the Messiah is to come from. Yet Matthew and Luke create stories and events to prove that Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem and come from Nazareth.

Thus "prophecy" was used just like miracles, or "signs", to prove that Jesus' coming and events in his life had been foretold in exact details in the Old Testament. However, faced with pagan antagonists St. Augustine conceded that Jesus was not actually mentioned in the Old Testament but added that he was obviously meant. That remains a matter of judgment and a dose of blind faith to top it.

THE BEST SELLER

It is claimed that with millions of copies printed in a very large number of languages, Bible is the most-read best seller. Even if it was so, that would not make it a "Word of God". However, even this fallacious claim needs to be contested. The mere fact that the Bible is printed and distributed (mostly free) in large numbers also does not automatically mean that it is also read by a large number of people. Look around and ask yourself if you know many people who have read the Bible from cover to cover, how many who have read even the New Testament from the beginning to the end. Over the ages not many have done so. "Today the Bible is so little read that the language of the Authorised Version is rapidly becoming obsolete: so that even in the United States, where the old tradition of the verbal infallibility of 'the book of books' lingers more strongly than anywhere else except perhaps Ulster, re-translations into modern English have been introduced perforce to save its bare intelligibility. It is quite easy today to find cultivated persons who have never read the New Testament" (George Bernard Shaw: *Androcles and The Lion*, pp. 15). Indeed Bible is the best seller which few care to read.

LOST INSPIRATION

Bible contains several references which are presently lost or declared to be apocryphal by the believers themselves. The most conspicuous example is that of the last part of the Gospel of Mark which has never been rediscovered. As long as someone does not deny its existence, which almost nobody does, they automatically agree that part of the inspiration was not divinely desired to be preserved or that some part of the truth, indeed an important part, dealing with Jesus' alleged resurrection and ascension had been lost. Similarly no one denies that parts of Old Testament had been lost, even taken away by marauding nations. No one had a copy of the Law until Hilkiah found it in the Temple ruins, (or did he?).

In his 1 Corinthians letter Paul says "In my letter I wrote that you must have nothing to do with loose lives"(1 Cor 5:9). There is no trace of this letter which must have had useful "inspired" wisdom. There is also another letter mentioned in 11 Cor (2:3,4) which is presumed to be 1 Corinthians but because of what Paul says about the content there is speculation that it may be yet another letter from Paul to the Corinthians. Thus there were possibly four letters, which we can call O Cor, 1 Cor, 1.5 Cor, and 2 Cor, out of which two have been lost. There is also a possibility that Paul may have written an Epistle to the Laodiceans: "And when this letter is read among you, see that it is also read to the congregation at Laodicea, and that you in return read the one from Laodicea"(Col 4:16). There is no record that any of the unavailable Epistles of Paul were rejected by the Nicene Council and therefore one is forced to conclude that useful "inspiration" has been lost. The fact is that at the time of their writing no one, not even Paul himself, had realised that these gems of inspiration were worth preserving and no care was taken to preserve these.

The book of Jude, verse 14, quotes from the book of Enoch which is apocryphal. Now, if Jude considers the prophecy contained in it worth quoting or the writer thought it was inspired and thus worth quoting then one wonders why was the book itself considered "un-inspired". There are several other books mentioned in the Bible itself which are no more traceable, e.g. Book of the Just(11 Sam 18), Acts of Solomon(1 Kg 11:41), Chronicles of the Kings of Israel(11 Kg 13:18,12), Chronicles of the Kings of Judah(11 Kg 21:25), etc. (See Appendix I for more listings).

REDUNDANCY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is considerable confusion among the Christians and indeed within the Bible itself whether the Old Testament as it stands has become redundant and obsolete. We shall quote from both the Old Testament and the New Testament to indicate the extent of confusion:

"Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah"(Jere 31:31). The "new" covenant, it is clear, was again to be for Israel/Judah, nothing to do with the Gentiles! The "new" covenant seems necessary because: "I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and judgments they could not live by"(Eze 20:25). According to Paul: "Had that first covenant been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one"(Heb 8:7); "The earlier rules are cancelled as impotent and useless, since the law brought nothing to perfection"(Heb 7:18); "By calling this covenant 'new' he has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and aging will go away"(Heb 8:13). "He set aside the first to establish the second"(Heb 10:9). "Christ ends the law and brings righteousness"(Rom 10:4); "we are discharged from the Law"(Rom 7:6). He called the teachings of the Jews as "fables and endless genealogies"(1 Tim 1:4).

Isaiah(40:8) had said that "the word of God lives for ever". Jesus too had said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophet: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill"(MT 5:17). "whosoever therefore shall break one of these commandments, and shall

WHAT WAS "THE HOLY SCRIPTURES" ACCORDING TO JESUS?

JEWS adopted the TANACH, 24 books which contain "Law, Prophets and Writings" compiled around 100 C.E. long after Jesus. These exclude the Apocrypha. This is the Hebrew Version.

PROTESTANTS follow the Hebrew version of Tanach but divide some of the books to make it 39.

ROMAN CATHOLICS add seven more books and also two more chapters in the book of Daniel to the Protestant version. Thus they have 46 books.

GREEK ORTHODOX have five additions (1 Esdras, II Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151 and 3 Maccabees) to the Catholic Bible

ETHIOPIC COPTS add the Shepherd of Herimas and the Apocalypse of Ezra.

Some OTHERS have different number of books.

WHICH "OLD TESTAMENT" DID JESUS FOLLOW?

teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven..."(MT 5:19). There is some confusion here whether Jesus was referring here only to the "Ten Commandments" or the Law as a whole. Talking after resurrection to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus "he said unto them, O fools and slow to believe all that the prophets had spoken"(LK 24:25). He seems to be endorsing both the "Law and the Prophets". Talking about the books of Moses he said "if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"(JN 5:47). Paul himself considered the "Old" Testament as "sacred writings/holy scriptures" and endorsed that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God"(II Tim 3:15, 16). Yet he declared the Law as dead!

Jesus himself seems to have changed at least some part of the the Law, e.g. his decree on divorce: whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth adultery"(MT 19:9). This is clearly not as allowed by the law: "when a man hath taken a wife, and marries her, and it comes to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife"(Deut 24:1-2). Jesus gave his reason: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefor they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. The Jews then queried, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? Jesus replied: "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so(MT 19:4-9, also MT 5:31-32, MK 10:11-12, LK 16:18). Even Jesus seems to contradict himself by allowing this "one flesh" to be put asunder in the case of fornication. [In such cases we may question if Jesus really did utter such words or were these a later fabrication by the Pauline Church]. We are thus told that (i) in the beginning there was no divorce, (ii) Moses made the divorce law because of the behaviour of the Israelites, and (iii) Jesus changed this Law. This is quite disturbing because it seems that this law was not divine but given by Moses himself. Interestingly it seems that this law which required "writing of divorcement" was given when written words must have become very common and within the reach of the common man. This smacks of later origin, or at least points to later inscription as written word was definitely not yet so common in the time of Moses. Also all this does not conform to Jesus' own declaration: "Think not that I have come to destroy the law". If he knew that the original decree was not divine but a personal one from Moses then we must conclude that at least that part of the law as contained in Deuteronomy did not have divine sanction and therefore Moses was not inspired properly when decreeing the law on divorce.

Divorce is not the only part of the law that was abrogated by the Christian saints. According to the book of Acts(15:24) the Apostles allowed that Gentiles need not be circumcised. The only restrictions for them were that they "abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication"(15:29). Thus even though the law was supposed to be of divine origin it was only for observance by the Jews. After all, was not God the God of Israel? Paul considered even these restrictions to be unnecessary: "Nothing is impure in itself"(Rom 14:14); "To the pure all things are pure"(Tit 1:15); "Every creature of God is good and nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer"(Tim 4:4); "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake"(I cor 10:27). Thus the Gentiles were left with just one restriction: No fornication! Modern Christians have dispensed with that as well!

The Christians in due course gave up observance of the Sabbath so forcefully enjoined on the Jews (Gen 2:3,15:32; Ex 20:8-11, 23,12,31:13,34:21,35:2-3; Lev 19,3,23,3; Deut 5:12-15; Jere ch.17; Isa ch 56,58; Neh ch.9; Eze ch.20). Paul was very clear in his letter to the Colossians(2:16): "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or the sabbath days". Paul was in no doubt that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. Christ has redeemed us from the curse, being made as curse for us"(Gal 3:10,13). "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb 7:12).

Thus we see that the Law having become redundant for at least the Christians under the "New" Covenant, the Old Testament stands to be redundant. If this be not so the New Testament stands on false grounds. Either way, whatever the authority of Bible, its basis stands eroded!

DID JESUS PRONOUNCE YHWA?

"Apparently by the first century, most Jews were no longer pronouncing God's revealed name. However, there are manuscripts that prove that early Christians using the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures could have seen the Hebrew Tetragrammaton used in Greek text. As George Howard, professor of religion and Hebrew stated 'When the Septuagint which the New Testament church used and quoted contained the Hebrew form of the divine name, and The New Testament writers no doubt included the Tetragrammaton in their quotations. But when the Hebrew form for the divine name was [later] eliminated in favour of Greek substitutes in the Septuagint it was eliminated also from the New Testament quotation of the Septuagint'. Therefore, Professor Howard reasons that first-century Christians must have clearly understood texts such as Matthew 22:44, where Jesus quoted the Hebrew Scriptures to his enemies. Howard says [that] first century church probably read, 'YHWH said to my Lord' instead of the later version, 'The Lord said to my Lord' (Psalm 110:1), which is as ambiguous as it is imprecise.

"That Jesus used the divine name is attested to by the Jewish accusation centuries after his death that if he performed miracles it was "only because he made himself master of the 'secret' name of God.

"Jesus certainly knew God's name. In spite of Jewish tradition at that time, Jesus would surely have used the name. He did not allow the traditions of men to over-rule the law of God Mark 7:9-13; John 1:1-3, 18; Colossians 1:15-16."

The above explanation has been taken from the book "Mankind and Search for God" (Page 259), published by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, N.Y. U.S.A. There are several obvious discrepancies in this statement which need to be pointed out:

1. The Tetragrammaton YHWH had not been pronounced by the Jews for more than a century before Jesus — That Jesus was able to pronounce it is obviously out of question.
2. Supposing God the Holy Ghost did secretly teach Jesus(God the Son) the true pronunciation, the Gospels would have indeed recorded the occasion where Jesus uttered the forbidden word. Jews were quick to object the transgression of breaking a minor "tradition" such as Jesus' disciples eating without first washing their hands(MT 15:2), they would have been only too quick to object to the pronouncing of the forbidden divine name of the "Most High".
3. We are unwilling to accept the Jewish "accusation made centuries after his [Jesus] death" that he performed his miracles because he mastered the 'secret' name of God as we are also unwilling to accept their slander against Virgin Mary. In any case in

making such an allegation Jews would be accepting that the holy man Jesus did indeed perform miracles. Also by giving credence to such an assumption Christians themselves would be showing doubts about Jesus' own ability to perform miracles.

4. We are told that just before his (supposed) death on the Cross Jesus cried "Eloi, Eloi lama sebachthani" (MK+15:34)/"Eli Eli lama sebachthani" (MT 27:46). This was the appropriate occasion that Jesus could have thrown all the inhibitions to the wind and said instead "Yahweh, Yahweh, lama sebachthani". He did not say so but rather called Him "Eloi/Eli" If this was the 'secret' word then we are curious if this was the Aramaic equivalent of the Arabic word Elahi, or "O Allah", which to all Muslims all over the world, and even to Arabic-speaking Christians of all sects in the Middle East, is the true name of the Most High God.

5. If Jesus broke "the tradition of men" and did pronounce the forbidden divine name, then the best demonstration would have been at the time he was teaching the "Lord's Prayer" to his disciples. We would have been told by the Gospel writers that he asked them to pray "Yahweh who art in heaven" instead of "Father, who art in heaven". Indeed it seems that he used the word 'Father' for the very reason that he did not want, or actually considered it blasphemous, to utter the forbidden word. No wonder Luke records that instead of "Eloi/Eli, why have you forsaken me", Jesus said "Father unto thy hands I commend my spirit".

6. The Old Testament canon was adopted around 100 C.E. at Jamnia long after Jesus had completed his ministry. He had been talking only of the "Law and the Prophets". The Christian churches of later days were using mostly the Greek Septuagint including Apocrypha which continued to be used as such by all shades of "Christians" until about the sixteenth century C.E. All these books were part of Jerome's Vulgate Bible and even of the 1611 C.E. King James Authorised translation. Elimination of the Non-Hebrew Greek Apocrypha is a recent event. Hebrew Scriptures were not as commonly used as the Greek Septuagint. The term Yahowah, or Jehovah, cropped up only in the Greek version, as explained below, long after Jesus had completed his earthly ministry.

In all their Scriptures the Jews used the Tetragrammate YHWH and did not pronounce it. While reading the Scriptures they must have used some sort of symbol or alternate words of which apparently there is no record. The Gentile readers started using the word "Adonay" (Lord, Master) or "A-o-A" underneath YAWH for ease of recollection. As the time passed this became a composite word YaHoWah. Jesus was not aware of this word because it did not exist in his days.

7. The particular case of replacing the Hebrew Tetragrammaton YHWH by "God" or "Lord" at numerous places in the Old Testament (as well as in the New Testament) shows the liberty mortal men, especially the Christians, have been taking in making changes and interpolations in Holy Scriptures/"Word of God" and then corrupting it and making it imprecise and ambiguous. Any translations and successive re-translations make these scriptures more confounding. Unfortunately the "originals" have been lost and with them the original concepts and meanings. Even if these "originals" were available today the authenticity of their message would be doubtful because of their purposive selection through human whims at the Nicaean Council of 325 C.E.

8. YHWH is actually associated with the root "haya"(to be) and in fact has no mystical connotation. Pious Jews did not want to use God's name in vain and that's that. We may note that long before Moses (TOR 17:1), "the Lord appeared to Abram and said

to him, "I am El Shaddai" (TOR 17:1), traditionally rendered as "God Almighty" (KJV). Too much fuss about nothing!

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

According to Dr. W.G. Scroggie (Is the Bible the Word of God?: Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, U.S.A.): Yes, the Bible is human, though some out of a zeal which is not according to the knowledge, have denied this. Those books have passed through the minds of men, are written in the language of men, were penned by the hands of men, and bear in their style the characteristics of men".

Another Bible scholar Kenneth Cragg, a former Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem (The Call of the Minaret, PP. 277) writes: "There is condensation and editing, reproduction and witness. The Gospels have come through the mind of the Church behind the authors. They represent experience and history".

"There are claimed contradictions that theologians have not yet resolved to every atheist's satisfaction. There are textual difficulties with which scholars are still wrestling. Only a Bible illiterate would deny these and other problems" (The Plain Truth, July 1975).

After reading the foregoing we arrive at the following conclusions:

1. The origin of most of the books of the Bible remains in doubt.
2. We know almost nothing about authors of the books of the Bible to verify whether they could be relied upon.
3. The Bible books have been brought together by human decisions which are always open to error. The basis of compilation is arbitrary. There are differences among the Christians themselves as to which books should or should not be in the Bible.
4. There are ambiguities in the text of the Bible at many places.
5. There are contradictory statements between different books of the Bible and sometimes within the same book. [Also see Appendices I and II for more details].
6. The Old Testament is redundant or else teachings of Paul are false and therefore the New Testament is (also) redundant and needs to be superseded by another Covenant/Testament for the continuation of God's guidance.

Whosoever wrote II Peter said: "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1:21). Since Holy Spirit could not have impelled holy men to write things of doubtful nature the authority of the Bible remains doubtful. This so-called Word of God is a collection of faulty, mutilated, falsified and contradictory documents which have been used to mislead the world far too long. We are told to have faith and believe. To believe, however, we need to have confirmation which comes only through intelligent comprehension. The Bible does not inspire that confidence.

"We cannot have lasting assurance that we are born again if we are questioning the authorship of the Bible. Lasting assurance of salvation is impossible if we are questioning the accuracy of Bible.....We cannot have lasting assurance of salvation if we are challenging the acceptability of the Bible". (I Will Take the High Road.....An Emmaus Correspondence Course). Unfortunately as it may be seen we cannot do so except blindly. With a substantial number of original books lost or deliberately destroyed and present compilation purposely made, there can be little faith in the Bible (in its present form) by a discerning mind. Can such a book be the "Word of God"? Our conclusion must be an emphatic "NO" for the entire collection as it stands now.

NOTE FOR THE MUSLIM READERS

In the Holy Quran repeated references are made to Torah, Psalms (ZABOOR), and the Gospel (INJEEL) as the Word of God as revealed to Moses, David and Jesus (peace be upon them) respectively who are acknowledged as divinely-inspired holy prophets of God. Christian missionaries therefore tell the Muslims: "Your Book itself endorses the Bible as the revealed Word of God" and "it is the same Bible today as it was in the days of Prophet Muhammad(B)". This is misleading and is clarified below:

What the Holy Quran clearly endorses is that the Word of God, in its original uncorrupted form, was indeed revealed to holy prophets like Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, as well as to many other prophets (peace be upon them all) that God almighty sent to the various parts and nations of the world in different times, and that it was not confined to any "chosen people" only since God loves all mankind and all His creation. Islam thus preaches the Unity of Revelation for all mankind. According to the Holy Quran true prophets of God were sinless. It cannot be expected that God in His wisdom would have chosen sinful people to convince their flock that they should avoid sin which they themselves could not.

Being a holy book itself the Holy Quran does not take a confrontational attitude. It does not call the Bible a "fake" book. It points out that there has been "interpolation" and "misinterpretation" in the original, *revealed*, message. The Holy Quran refers to a number of truths in the Bible that have survived vagaries of time and tells the Jews and Christians to "look even in your own books" to verify the truths as contained in the Holy Quran. According to Muslim scholars the presently compiled Bible, inspite of corruption, contains part of the original message as later recollected by its various writers, yet not necessarily the whole truth.

As presented in the preceding two chapters, the claim of the authenticity of the whole "Bible" is not made even by the Bible itself and indeed belied by the quality of its contents. One has only to compare the accounts of the story of Joseph(P) as contained in the Bible and the Holy Quran to appreciate the superior quality of the latter. The haphazard account given in the Bible clearly shows the human hand having confounded the account. Many other accounts differ in the two books. That is proof itself that the Holy Quran does not recognise Old or New Testament as the true Word of God but that these have undergone corruption, and especially misinterpretation. It is not expected that the Holy Quran would be endorsing a fictitious claim.

It is also claimed that since Bible is the Word of God it has to live forever(Isa 40:8). If this was to be the case in the physical sense then we should be having the tablets of the Law with Ten Commandments somewhere in the British Museum, U.S. Library of the Congress, or in the Archives of a former (Christian) imperial power. The Word of God is certainly manifested and preserved forever in the Holy Quran. This is the only holy book which is memorised by millions of its followers as a whole or in large sections by its followers. It shall indeed live for ever.

The Holy Quran itself says very plainly: (Surah no. 2, Al Baqrah: verse 75): "A party of them heard the word of God and perverted it knowingly after they understood". The Holy Quran itself does not undertake wholesale denunciation of the Scriptures. In a fine way it presents its own parallel versions to underline the fact that it does not endorse many of the biblical stories and concepts in their present (corrupted) form.

It is argued that when Jews would approach the Holy Prophet Muhammad(B) for his opinion on certain matters the Holy Prophet would ask them to consult their own books: (Surah no. 5, Al Maida: verse 46): But why do they come to thee for decision when they have (their own) law before them?... therein is the (plain) command of God." This is said to be the

evidence that the Holy Quran accepts the verdicts of the Torah. It, however, needs to be noted that the Jews were obviously not coming to the Holy Prophet for adjudication on their religious matters. They would come to him with regard to temporal matters hoping that he would adjudicate on the basis of Islamic "justice with compassion" rather than the more strict "eye for eye" Mosaic code. They were reminded that if they were confident of the divine nature of their own books then they ought to be consulting what they themselves considered to be the Word of God.

If the Holy Quran held the Bible to be uncorrupted then it should not hold views different from it. Just to illustrate obvious differences consider the following:

- (i) Christians quote the Bible to support their thesis of the Original Sin. According to Islam there is no such thing as the Original Sin, all persons are born sinless.
- (ii) According to the Bible "all have sinned" and most heinous sins are attributed even to the greatest biblical prophets. The Holy Quran considers all prophets to be morally and ethically good models of excellence themselves.
- (iii) Bible says Jesus was crucified. The Holy Quran says he was not.
- (iv) Christians claim that Bible teaches Trinity. The Holy Quran denounces the concept.
- (v) The Old Testament considers God to be God of Israel. New Testament says Jesus would not go to the non-Jews. Even his nominated apostles taught to none but the Jews only. The Holy Quran proclaims that prophets came to all nations of the world for their own people. It proclaims Word of God to all mankind.
- (vi) The Holy Quran differs in many aspects from the Bible. Consider the story of Abraham's(P) sacrifice of his "eldest son". Bible says it was Isaac(P) who was offered for sacrifice; The Holy Quran says it was Ishmael(P). Reading even the biblical account itself one feels inclined to agree with the Holy Quran.
- (vii) The very narrative of the story of Joseph(P) brings out the beauty of the Quranic rendition. The biblical account is like a folklore being told in a caravan-sarai with many oddities. The Quranic version is a lesson in ethics and morality.
- (viii) The Holy Quran narrates certain incidences which are not given in any of the books of the New Testament. However, some of these incidences are mentioned in some pseudepigraphic documents. Can we then say that the Holy Quran also endorses these non-canonical books?
- (ix) Even today the Christians themselves cannot agree on the contents and text of a universally acceptable Bible; yet they expect that the Muslims should agree to their "Bible"! — which one?
- (x) There are a very large number of factual errors in the Bible! Yet it is insisted that the Holy Quran accepts the authenticity of the Taurat, Zabur and Injil as presently available!
- (xi) Authors of some of the books were obviously not properly "inspired" by their own admission when writing at least some of the portions, e.g., 1 Corinthians(7:10, 12, 26). Paul's boastings and cursings in his Epistles need not have been divinely approved, nor the anti-jewish tone of the New Testament be the revelation of a "loving God"!

COULD THE HOLY QURAN ENDORSE SUCH "SCRIPTURES" TO BE DIVINELY INSPIRED, AUTHENTIC?

CHAPTER III

MESSIAH, THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

THE ISRAELITES

For the proper understanding of the events of the life of Jesus it is necessary to understand the background of the development of the concept of MESSIAH and the forces that led to the concepts such as "Chosen People", "Son of God" and "Resurrection". These concepts, as we shall see, had their roots in the history of Israel and the influence of the conquering forces, Greek mythology and paganism prevailing among the Romans and other nations in the region.

The Old Testament, as we have already seen is a collection of folklore, legends, myths, history, etc., of the Israelite tribes. The book of Genesis begins with the creation of the universe and later of Adam and Eve. According to the story told in the Bible, Adam and Eve were placed by God in the bliss of the Garden of Eden with full run of the place except with one restriction — they were forbidden to eat the fruit of a certain tree. Under the temptation of the evil serpent (Satan) the woman Eve induced her husband Adam to eat the fruit of the Forbidden Tree along with her. For this "Original Sin" of disobedience to God's command Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden to live on the Earth. It is for this original sin that the "Seed of Adam" must suffer separation from God. From the book of Genesis we learn of the Great inundation of the times of Noah. In due course we are introduced to Abraham and how he begot first his son Ishmael from Hagar the maid of his wife Sarai (Sarah) and later another, Isaac, from the aged Sarai herself. The story then proceeds through the generations of Isaac till Jacob (Israel) and his sons enter Egypt, after Joseph had first been dumped by his brothers, rescued by a passing caravan sold into Egypt, and eventually became a major official in the court of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The progeny of Jacob are called the Israelites.

Ever since Abraham and his progeny were ordered to circumcise all their males as a token of entering into a Covenant with JEHOVAH, they considered themselves bound by that Covenant. The Israelites considered to have inherited that Covenant through Isaac. By this Covenant the Israelites considered themselves to have a very special relationship with Jehovah who was their God and they His chosen people. To these circumcised people the rest of the world was GENTILE, something unclean.

The Israelites having settled in Egypt were harshly treated as worse than slaves by later Pharaohs. For several generations they toiled and sweated until they were rescued and taken out of Egypt by Moses. For forty years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula. Throughout their journey through the wilderness the Israelites were troublesome, quarrelsome and an unruly lot always confronting Moses with ever new problems and unsavoury situations (Deut 9:7). It is during these wilderness years that Moses declared to them that JEHOVAH, or YAHWEH, the God, had given to him Ten Commandments written on two stone tablets. He ordered an Ark to be prepared for storage of these tablets. The Ark was a box made of wood and covered with gold and contained the commands and testimonies of God. A huge tent with fine covering and ornamentations was prepared for the purpose of communal worship. This was known as the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was located in a huge enclosure part of which was an open courtyard where sacrifices were offered on the Altar. The Tabernacle was divided in two parts; in the Holy Place the priests carried out their religious services, and the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was placed. No one was allowed inside the Holy of Holies except the High Priest and even that only once a year on the

Day of Atonement. A system of worship and sacrifices was developed. Whenever an Israelite did a sin and needed forgiveness or wanted a wish and therefore needed to appease Jehovah he would bring in an offering or sacrifice. Detailed laws of social nature as well as an elaborate system of religious observance and sacrifices were laid down as are now contained in Torah or the Five Books of Moses.

Soon after the death of Moses the Israelites entered their "promised land" of Palestine under the leadership of Joshua. When Joshua established a permanent religious centre at Shiloh the Ark was located there. Because of the enemies around them having great kings, the Israelites also felt that they too needed a king to keep them united and strong. Samuel, the prophet, therefore named Saul to be their king. In a battle with the Philistines another young man named David killed the giant Goliath and became a hero. After Saul's death David became the king of Israel. David was followed on the throne by his son Solomon.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

"In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the Temple of Yahweh" (Kg 6:1). This was to be in Jerusalem. "And the word of Yahweh came to Solomon, This house you are building if you follow my statutes and obey my ordinance and faithfully follow my commandments, I will fulfill that promise I made about you to your father David. And I will make my home among the sons of Israel, and never forsake Israel my people. Solomon built the Temple and completed it" (I Kg 6:11-14). Solomon took seven years to build it (I Kg 6:38). The Ark, which had in the meantime been brought to David's citadel, was now placed in the Temple. "There was nothing in the Ark except the two stone tablets Moses had placed in it in Horeb, the tablets of the covenant which Yahweh had made with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt; they are still there today" (I Kg 8:9). [The words "they are still there today" are omitted from KJV].

The hey-day of the Israel's glory was the kingdom ruled by David and his son Solomon. The glory, however, did not last long. Under sinful kings the kingdom was divided into the Northern and Southern kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom did not last very long. The Southern Kingdom of Judaea, (and hence the word Jew), also fell to the conquering nations sometimes later. The Jewish history, full of victories and defeats, is also full of legends of heroism and tenacity. According to their legends, they were victorious and prosperous whenever they were righteous and obedient to God's commandments. Often they were subjugated and enslaved by a number of conquering nations and the Israelite sages and prophets attributed this to their sins and God's punishment for those sins. A number of times they were taken into exile as slaves but credit goes to their tenacity that somehow they survived those periods of turmoil, captivity and exile and managed to save for the posterity their legends, traditions and religious practices. Throughout their tribulations and exiles they kept their hearts on their return to the Holy Land in the hope of regaining their lost glory. (It is this desire which has once again brought the Jews from all over the world back to Palestine to claim and establish their State of Israel). However, in these turmoils most of the ten tribes (out of the twelve tribes) were dispersed in foreign lands or otherwise lost their identity.

During the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, rose a mighty prophet Jeremiah, who through the scribe Baruch, had a roll to be written to warn of Yahweh's wrath because of the iniquity and evilness of the Israelites. "When Jehudi (king's servant) had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth... Therefore thus saith the Lord of

Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David"(Jere 36:23,30). This curse meant that his son Jeconiah and his progeny could no longer inherit the throne. Thus while David had been promised that his seed will reign on his throne forever and ever, and Yahweh is said to have reaffirmed the same promise with Solomon as a reward for building the Temple, the curse had now fallen on the royal line. This aspect, as we shall see later, will give an interesting twist to the genealogy of Jesus.

THE TRIBULATIONS AND EXILES

"It is true that God brought Israel out of Egypt, knew them as he knew no other people, gave them the land of Canaan, raised up for them prophets and Nazirites, and granted them such privileges as no other people possessed. But Israel's persistent apostasy had cancelled all this. Israel was no more to God than the Ethiopians. The bringing of Israel out of Egypt meant no more than the bringing of the Philistines from Crete or the Syrians from east of Damascus. Israel deserved and would suffer punishment equally with Damascus, Philistia, Amman and Moab. 'Freely ye have received, freely give'(Matt. 10.8) is a rule that must be observed by the people God in every generation"(G.H. Davies, et. el.: Twentieth Century Bible Commentary).

"In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria, captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah on the Habor, river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. This happened because the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh, their God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the grip of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They worshipped other gods, they followed the practices of the nations that Yahweh had dispossessed for them"(II Kg 17:6-8).

"The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamuth and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites, they took possession of Samaria and lived in towns"(II Kg 17:24). These people worshipped their own gods and in addition Yahweh the god of their new country. This is the origin of the Samaritans who were living there even in the times of Jesus. The Jews looked down on them as unclean and would not socialise with them. Those of the Jews who did intermarry with them were also considered to be Samaritans and incidentally carried their beliefs and customs with them.

During all these turbulent years the Israelites adopted sinful ways which had been forbidden to them. Many of their kings adopted idol worship over the time. Through neglect and wars the Temple built by Solomon became a ruin until in the reign of Josiah(640 – 609 B.C.E) the king "did what was pleasing to Yahweh, and in every respect followed the example of his ancestor David, not deviating from it right or left"(II Kg 22:2). On his orders the Temple was repaired and during the excavation the book of the Law was discovered by Hilkiah the priest and it was authenticated by Huldah the prophetess. Israel was once again following the Law!

However, Israel was to suffer privation and humiliation again because they did what was not pleasing to YAHWEH. Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he came to the throne and he reigned for three months in Jerusalem. He did what was displeasing to Yahweh, just as his father had done. At that time the troops of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marched on Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, himself came to attack the city while his troops were besieging it. Then Jehoiachin, king of Judah, surrendered to the king of Babylon, he, his mother, his officers, his nobles and eunuchs, and the king of Babylon took them prisoners. This was in the eighth year of king Nebuchadnezzar.

"The latter carried off all the treasures of the Temple of Yahweh and the treasure of the royal palace, and broke up all the golden furnishings that Solomon the king of Israel had made for the sanctuary of Yahweh, as Yahweh had foretold. He carried all Jerusalem into

exile, all the nobles and all the notables, ten thousand of these were exiled, with all the blacksmiths and metalworkers; only the poorest in the country were left behind"(II Kg 24:8-14).

"The king of Babylon made Mathaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in succession to him, and changed his name to Zedekiah"(II Kg 24:17). Soon Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon and "in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came with his whole army to attack Jerusalem... in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the guard, an officer of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. The Chaldean troops who accompanied the commander of the guard demolished the walls surrounding Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan commander of the guard deported the remainder of the population left behind in the city, the deserters who had gone over to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the common people.

"The commander of the guard left some of the humbler country people as vineyard workers and plowmen. The Chaldeans broke up the bronze pillars from the Temple of Yahweh, the wheeled stands and the bronze sea that were in the Temple of Yahweh, and took the bronze away to Babylon. they also took the ash containers, the scoops, the knives, the incense boats, and all the bronze furnishings used in worship"(II Kg 25:1-14).

"All this happened because all the heads of priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that Yahweh had consecrated to himself in Jerusalem. Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at the prophets, until at last the wrath of Yahweh rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

"He summoned against them the king of the Chaldeans who put their young warriors to the sword within their sanctuary; he spared neither youth nor virgin, neither old man nor aged cripple; God handed them all over to him. All the furnishings of the Temple of God, large and small, the treasures of the king and his officials, he carried everything off to Babylon. They burned down the temple of God, demolished all its places, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of Yahweh was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah: until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation"(II Kg 36:14-21).

"And in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, to fulfill the word of Yahweh that was spoken through Jeremiah, Yahweh roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom. Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up"(II Kg 36:22-23, Ezr 1:1-3).

A portion of history has been skipped between II Chr(36:21) and III Chr(36:22): Nebuchadnezzar was a Chaldean ruling from Babylon. At the time of his death the neighbouring Medea was being ruled by Astyages. Legend has it that the oracles told him that his grandson Kurush will one day over-throw him. So he planned to kill the infant who was however saved, suckled by a dog, and later taken care of by a shepherd. In actual fact Kurush or what we know as Cyrus in Latin was from a Persian tribe akin to the Medes. He extended the borders of his empire to the shores of the Aegean Sea. Cyrus was a great administrator and

chose to treat the conquered people gently, allowing them their self-respect and even considerable home rule. Jews were one of the groups that benefited from this policy. It may, however, be noted that the actual period of exile was only forty-eight years rather than seventy as stated in II Chr(36:21).

TEMPLE REBUILT

So the exiled returned to Jerusalem. It took them twenty two years to rebuild what may be called the "Second Temple". However, they did not return in a vacuum. Those exiled had been noblemen, upperclassmen and skilled artisans. Those who had been left behind had been peasants and lowly commoners now also in possession of the lands and houses originally belonging to the exiled. There were also the Samaritans who had been brought in from foreign lands and settled in the vacated towns and lands. The returnees in their exile had not only preserved their religious fervour but through their prophets in adversity refined it. The return of the exiled could therefore mean friction. To the returnees the local population were the usurpers. To the locals the returnees were foreigners who had a strange mannerism, a certain haughtiness and high-handedness, who looked down on them as usurpers and as having a debased religion only superficially resembling the now refined Judaism.

That there were intrigues by the Samaritans to influence the Persian kings was but natural. "Then the people of the country set out to dishearten and frighten the people of Judah from building any further: they turned counselors against them, to defeat their purpose. This lasted throughout the reign of Cyrus king of Persia and until the reign of Darius king of Persia(Ezr 4:4-5). "Thus the work on the temple of God in Jerusalem was brought to a standstill; it remained interrupted until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia"(Ezr 4:24). However, Darius on reconsideration allowed the work of the rebuilding of the temple to restart. Prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the people to carry on the work expeditiously. Soon after the Jews started rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. It was also during this time that Ezra put the "Law" into writing and read it to the people. It is here that Judaism was formally born. Building of the walls of Jerusalem caused the Samaritans to restart their intrigues and they sent a petition to Xerxes (Ahasuerus) informing him that Jews planned to revolt after they were secure within the rebuilt walls. "There is a certain unassimilated nation scattered among other nations throughout the provinces of your realm; their laws are different from those of all the other nations and they ignore the royal edicts. Hence it is not in the king's interest to tolerate them"(Est 3:8). Xerxes sent letters to the governors of all his provinces "that this people ... including women and children, to be destroyed root and branch by swords of their enemies without any pity or mercy, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of the present year"(Est 3:23). The Jerusalem Bible includes a detailed letter in which the slaughter of the Jews is indicated to be on "fourteenth" day of Adar. KJV, NIV, GNB, RBV, NWT, RSV give a shorter version and indicate the thirteenth day of Adar as the day for the slaughter).

It seems king Ahasuerus got displeased with his favourite wife Vashti and deposed her. Soon he realized his folly and felt dejected. In order to please him it was decided to seek most beautiful virgins from all over the land who were brought in and especially trained and prepared for the king's companionship. One of these girls was Hadesra, also called Esther, who as an orphan has been brought up by her cousin Mordecai, a Jew. Esther entered the harem of the king and so pleased the king that he made her the queen. It is through her that Mordecai managed to get approval from the king for the Jews to defend themselves. Before the appointed day of their massacre they fell on their unsuspecting enemies and killed thousands of them.

The story is told in the book of Esther which may well have been a fiction as history does not record the names Vashti, Esther, or even the slaughter of the enemies by the Jews.

The last scenes of the Old Testament depict the Jews as a small band of exiles just returned from captivity in Babylon fighting to maintain their distinct identity, their culture and their religion. Ezra and Nehemiah exhort them to stand resolutely against foreign onslaughts and influences. Without friends and ally their only hope lies in God himself. Let the people be true to God, and obey his laws and He would protect and sustain them. They looked forward to the days of David and Solomon so that as David conquered Goliath so will someone, someday, reorganise the Jews and once again the glorious days would return. He will be the "anointed one", the Messiah. He will be in the line of David the king. Throughout this period the centre for the Jewish hope, culture and religion remained the Temple in Jerusalem.

The last book in the Old Testament is that of Malachi. It ends with the hope: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"(Mal 4:5-6).

"In the case of all the prophets, the first element to be mentioned is the immediacy of their message. For them always 'The time is at hand', and this is true from Amos down to John the Baptist. The prophets were called into action by God through the crisis of events. For Amos the lion had roared and was even now leaping on the prey. The judgment has come, the bulging wall will be tested with the plumb-line, and whatever is out of the true will be destroyed"(G.H. Davies, et. al., ed.: Twentieth Century Bible Commentary).

Jeremiah had said: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ... After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"(Jere 31:31-34)". It will be four hundred years till the period about which Matthew writes in the first book included in the Christian New Testament.

The original covenant had been with Abraham and Isaac. Moses had been a "deliverer" of the Israelites from Egypt (Acts 7:35). Ehud, son of Geru, too had been a deliverer, a redeemer(Judg 3:9). Obadiah(21) had promised many "saviours". Moses was princely but Aaron had been his priest. Ehud was a prince. Melchizedek had been a king as well as a priest. The concept of "Messiah" kept changing according to the demand of the day. Could there be not one but TWO Messiahs — one princely and one priestly — as Jeremiah had hinted? Daniel(9: 25, 26) too seems to hint about two Messiahs. "an anointed one, a prince" and of another "anointed one (who) shall be cut off: He was possibly referring to the High Priests Jeshua and Onias III respectively.

In the four hundred years that followed, the Israelites remained subjugated. The Greeks under Alexander conquered Palestine and when the empire was sub-divided, it went to Ptolmey the Greek general from Egypt. Then the Seleucids of Syria captured Palestine which was recaptured by Ptolemy sometimes around 310 B.C.E. This struggle continued for a whole century. In 175 B.C.E. Antiochus Epiphanes became the king of Syria and decided to completely subjugate the Jewish people. He conquered them and set up an altar of Zeus, the Greek deity, in the Temple. He ordered that Jewish priests take part in the desecration by offering sacrifices, even of swine, to Zeus. All the copies of the Law were ordered to be burned. Women with circumcised children were killed with their children hanging on their necks. An aged priest

Mattathias, of the Hasmonian family, refused to obey and even killed the king's official. Like the killing of an Egyptian by Moses in the earlier times, this was the signal for national resistance. The Hasmonian revolt, which later became known as the Maccabean resistance, was waged as a guerilla warfare and is known for extreme heroism. The struggle succeeded after great sacrifices and the Jews were once again free. Within three years of desecration, the Temple was cleansed and the daily sacrifices restored in 165 B.C.E.(25th December!). The Jewish feast of Hanukkah celebrates this event. Mattathias defeated four Syrian armies in two years and became priest-king of the now free Jewish nation. Here then was a possible "saviour/deliverer" (MESSIAH, THE ANOINTED ONE, CHRIST) that the Jews had been longing for and looking forward to. On his death he was succeeded by his son Judas starting a dynasty of the Maccabees which lasted for just over a century.

THE MACCABEES

The Maccabees were Levites, of the tribe which was assigned the priestly role, and could not qualify to be the family of the Messiah about whom the prophetic writings had been too clear that he will have to be from the Davidic line, from the family of Judah. However, Jeremiah(33: 15-26) had prophesied.: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good-thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In these day will I cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In these days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely... For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man to offer burnt offering, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually".

The Apocryphal "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" which is supposed to contain the last words of the twelve sons of Jacob on their death-beds gives Levi's Testimony regarding himself: "Thou shalt stand near the Lord, and shalt be his minister, and shalt declare his mysteries to men, and shalt proclaim concerning him that shall redeem Israel. And by thee and Judah shall the Lord appear among men, saving every race of me"(Testament of Levi, Chapter I, Verses 13-14). To sanctify their role the Maccabees succeeded in slipping into Psalm 110 a reference to Melchizedek, both a priest and a king, who lived in the times of Abraham. But even this did not get them the right to rule.

The Hasmonians were not adept in good administration and power soon corrupted them. The nation again fell prey to decadence and the freedom was short lived. In 63 B.C.E. Pompey, the Roman general captured Jerusalem. In his curiosity to have a look at the Jewish god Pompey forced his way into the "Holy of Holies" of the Temple where only the High Priest could enter, and even so only once a year. Pompey must have been mystified and disappointed to find it without the signs of anything to worship. Palestine once again became a Roman possession and the Maccabean monarchy came to an end.

Pompey installed a surviving Maccabean prince Hyrcanus as the High Priest without civil powers which were vested with Antipater an Idumean Jew whose loyalty to the Roman cause needed to be rewarded. It was not long afterwards that the Parthians conquered Judaea, now a smaller province within Palestine, and installed Antignus Mattathias as king and high priest. Herod, the second son of Antipater, escaped to Rome and managed to persuade Mark Antony, who was then in power, to declare him the king and Hyrcanus' grandson Aristobulus III was installed as the high priest. However, Herod had Aristobulus as well as Hyrcanus executed and later killed Mariam, his own wife of Maccabean line who was sister of Aristobulus III. This was the inglorious end of the Maccabees.

Since there was always a hope for a Messiah to come, who will be from the line of David, the fall of the Maccabees did not extinguish that hope. Indeed their fall must have rekindled, or rather reinforced the hope that the promised Messiah from the Davidic line will soon appear to challenge the power of the enemies and restore the kingdom of Israel.

In the meantime Herod ruled Judaea under the Roman tutelage. The high priest at the Temple remained in charge of religious matters subject to the Roman Governor's secular powers. A Jewish High Council, The Sanhedrin, advised the high priest on religious matters.

THE NOT SO INDISPENSABLE MESSIAH

"The Jews thought of salvation in terms of the nation rather than of the individual. Driven across the earth with apparantly irrational ruthlessness, they strengthened themselves with the belief that they were still the chosen and favored people of God. He was their father, and a just God, it could not be that He would break covenant with Israel" (Will Druant: History of Civilization, vol.IV—Age of Faith, pp.355). While the Jews did yearn for a Messiah to come and redeem the (Israeli) nation, the hope or yearning was not necessarily consistent. For example, during the Persian exile the emphasis had been on preserving and keeping the Law. While the kingdom and Temple lay open to the ravages of the marauding armies, the Torah (Law) seemed to have the everlasting and of greatest priority. The hope of a Davidic Messiah receded into the background. Indeed the figure of Messiah is absent from such works as Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Judith, Ben Sira, Jubilees, Assumption of Moses, I Baruch, I Enoch (1-36, 91-104), II Enoch, and even I & II Maccabees.

The succession of High Priests who assumed the role of prince was not such as to inspire men with hopes of leadership from that source in the coming kingdom. In fact under the Roman rule the High Priests in Jerusalem had come to be seen as stooges of the Gentile Usurpers. Hope of Israel lay more on the Zealots than the religious authority. The High Priests on the other hand would see in the Messiah a threat to their own privileged position.

SON OF MAN

Another term which prevailed parallel to that of Messiah is "the Son of Man". It first appeared in Daniel(7:13) as one "like unto a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to be presented before the ancient of days". It is significant to note that he is not the Messiah but is identified with "the Saints of the Most High". In the book of Ezekiel this term appears over 100 times signifying "man" both in his creaturely weakness and in his glorious place in God's creation (Also see Ps(8:4,5).

In Similitude of Enoch (I Enoch 37-71) the Son of Man is presented as a heavenly being with no prior earthly existence at all. He is pre-existent(48:3), having been created by God before the founding of the world. He is a divine creature whose face is "full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels"(46:1) upon whom God bestows his own divine glory.

Authors of the New Testament books have borrowed heavily from the concept of "Son of Man" to describe certain aspects of Jesus' earthly sojourn and especially his return with the clouds of heaven. Although Jesus did not apply the term "Messiah" to himself and indeed charged his disciples to tell no man that he was so, he nevertheless openly used the expression "Son of Man" for himself.

THE JEWISH SECTS

The religious environ created and in turn was affected by various sects within the Jewish nation. Since different sects have played important part in the development of religious, cultural and political thinking of the time, it will be useful to mention them for better

understanding of various events. The development of sectarianism is phenomena of the post-exilic period. Major sects are described below:

The Scribes It was a necessity of the times that there should be a class of people who should be learned in the Law and capable of interpreting it. It was through the teachings of such Scribes that Torah was established and assemblies were set up throughout the land for worship and preaching. Amid a multiplicity of interpretations and opinions the Jewish religion became ritualistic and complicated.

The Pharisees advocated complete religious restoration and rigorous observance of ancestral laws. They represented the strict orthodoxy and believed in resurrection of the dead. They were a close-knit people who, though their membership was small, commanded considerable power and were well-respected. Their power usually lay in the rural areas.

Although the Pharisees are generally looked at as rigidly orthodox, yet in some respects they were the progressive element of Judaism. Their efforts to re-interpret the law resulted in modifications and adaptations known as "oral tradition" later codified as Mishna. Pharisees took responsibility of developing and maintaining of the synagogue as a centre of worship and instruction. It is through the efforts of this class that Judaism managed to survive after the tragic Jewish revolt.

The Sadducees or the Tsaddikin (the righteous ones) represented the aristocratic priestly families who clung tenaciously to ancient privileges and legal observance. Unlike the Pharisees, they attached little importance to oral or traditional law. They accepted the Torah, the original Law of Moses, but rejected all subsequent revelation or tradition. They did not accept the idea of resurrection although both in the Talmud (the Jewish book of traditions) and Gospels they seem to be denying only the bodily resurrection and not the future state. Because of their priestly affiliation they carried considerable power, which was quite often unduly exploited, but were not much popular with the common Jewish people because of their bigotry and arrogance and their association with the Romans who were the source of their power. Being of aristocracy and having closer contacts with the Romans the Sadducees were generally knowledgeable of Greek and of Hellenistic thought and culture.

The Hasidim (The Pious Ones) were the religiously-oriented laymen and country folk who utterly rejected Hellenism and followed the more ritualistic form of Judaism and were known for their fervor.

The Nazaretes were those who either being devoted by their parents in infancy or by their own voluntary act, placed themselves in the service of God, either for life or for a certain period. They lead a particularly pious and strict life taking extreme care from defilement and contact with unclean things. Some consider that John the Baptist was a Nazarite.

The Essenes were a splinter group of the Hasidim and lived as a fraternity of mystico-ascetics. They rejected the rituals and temple sacrifices. They were strict vegetarians and believed in the transmigration of souls. They sought to seek an extremely pious life and lived a communal life in remote areas. It is possible that John the Baptist, the voice from the wilderness, may have either been associated with or influenced by them. Although they are not mentioned in the New Testament, Jesus too may have been inclined to approve them.

"Despite recent discoveries pertaining to the Essenes, four long-standing misconceptions still cling to them. They are believed to have resided exclusively in isolated, monastic-style desert communities. They are believed to have been extremely few in number. They are believed to have been celibate. They are believed to have been non-violent, adhering scrupulously to an other wordly pacifism.

"Research since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls established each of these beliefs about the Essenes to be erroneous ... Working from original documents and questioning the reliability of second-hand commentators such as Josephus, Eisenman [Dr. Robert Eisenman, Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Long Beach, Ca, U.S.A.] traces the various names by which the members of the Qumran community — the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls — referred to themselves. This leads him to conclude that the Sons of Light, the Sons of Truth, the Sons of Zadok, or Zaddikim(Zadokites), the Men of Melchizedek(the z-d-k ending reflecting a variation of Zadok), the Ebionim(the Poor), the Hassidim the Essenes and the Nazarin(the Nazareans) are ultimately one and the same — not different groups, but different metaphors or appellations for essentially the same group, or the same movement. The primary objective of this movement seems to have been oriented towards the dynastic legitimacy of the high priesthood. In the Old Testament, the High Priest of both David and Solomon is called Zadok, either as a personal name or as an official title. He is traditionally associated, very closely, with the Messiah, the anointed one, the rightful king. More specifically, he is associated with the Davidic Messiah ... Eisenman also traces the Sadducees back to the same source, indicating that the term 'Sadducees' is in fact a variant, or perhaps a corruption, of 'Zadok' or 'Zaddikim'. In other words, the original Sadducees would have been devout dynastic priesthood closely associated with at least the principle of an expected Davidic Messiah. We do not know the names of those who constituted the Zadokites or Essenes. We do know the names of those who constituted the Nazarean Party. They are people who either knew Jesus personally or apprenticed themselves, perhaps at second or third remove, to those who did. But apart from this, the Nazareans are indistinguishable from the broader movement of which they were part. The Nazarean Party must not therefore be seen as a separate unit, but rather as a nucleus — the equivalent of a general staff, a privy council or a cabinet"(Michael Baigent, et. el.: The Messianic Legacy, pp. 54-55, 57-58).

It is significant that in Acts(3:14, 7:52 and 22:15) in Hebrew the title Ziddik is given to Jesus. It is also not coincidental that Jesus' brother Jacob, known subsequently as Saint James, or James the Just, who presided over the "Mother Church" in Jerusalem after Jesus, is referred to as "Zadok"(Hebrew) Zadok Jacob, Arabic: Siddiq Ya'aqub).

The Samaritans: During various occupations by outside invaders a large number of new settlers were brought into Palestine especially during the Exilic periods. They married into local Jews and many of them adopted Jewish customs and religious practices mixing them with their own. They believed in the "original" form of Torah. In the post exilic period when Judaism was revived into a more strict and systematic form, the non-conforming admixture was called the Samaritans as the region was known as Samaria. To the Jews these were unclean people, not to be socially mixed with. However, since they had their roots among the Jews themselves as well as in their traditions, there were frequent conversions to Judaism. In many ways they were treated differently from the GENTILES which included Romans, Greeks, and other pagans.

All these sects contributed to the thought and politics of the period in which Jesus was born, lived and, as is said, was crucified, resurrected and ascended to heaven.

"I cannot find any authentic ground to believe that the Sects among the Jews were more ancient than the days of the Maccabees, but arose after that Antiochus had subdued Jerusalem, and reduced the generality of the Jews to Paganism, when (the better to confirm his Conquests) he erected there an Academy, placing therein the Pythagorean, Platonick, & Epicurean Philosophers. This I conceive (& so do others) to have been the original of the Pharisees, Saducees, and Essenes; tho' afterwards, when the Maccabees had made an Edict against, and anathematized all that taught their Children the Greek Philosophy, one party did justify their Tenets, by intitling them to Sadoc & Baithos, & others to a Cabala derived successively from Ezra & Moses. The introduction of those Sects, & of the Cabala, occasion'd that Exposition of the Prophecy of Jacob (Gen. xlix, 10). The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, & unto him shall the gathering of the people be. From whence they did (according to that fantastic Cabala) imagine that whensoever the Scepter should depart from Judah, & the dominion thereof cease, that then there should arise a Messiah of the line of David (yet his being of the line of David was not a general opinion, for how then could any have imagin'd Herod the great to have been the Messiah, or how could Josephus fix that character upon Vespasian) who should restore the Empire & Glory of Israel, to whom all nations should bow & submit to his Scepter. I do not read that the Jews harbor'd any such exposition during their Captivity under Nebuchadnezzar: altho' that the Scepter so departed at that time from the Tribe of Judah, & house of David, that it was never resettled in it more, after their return to Jerusalem no such thing is spoken of; when Antiochus Epiphanes subdued them, prophaned their Temple, destroyed their Laws & rites, & left them nothing of a Scepter & Lawgiver, during all which time notwithstanding they had the same Prophecies & among them, there is news of any expected Messiah. But after the curiosity of the Rabbi's had involved them in the pursuance of Mystical Numbers ad Pythagorically or Cabalistically to explain them, according to the Gematria, then it was discovered that Shilo & Messiah consisted of letters which make up the same Numerals, and therefore that a mysterious promise of a Redeemer was insinuated thereby, & the Prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17) concerning a Star out of Jacob & a Scepter rising out of Israel, with a multitude of other predictions (which the condition of their Nation made them otherwise to despair of), must be fulfill'd under this Messiah. I name no other Prophecies, because they are either general & indefinitely express'd as to the time of their accomplishment, or else inexplicable from their obscurity, or uncertain as to their authority, as the weeks of Daniel, which book the Jews reckon among their hagiographa or Sacred, but not Canonical books.

This Prophecy likewise had a contradictory one (Jer. xxii. 30), where 'tis said of Coniah, That no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the Throne of David, & ruling any more in Judah; also Ezekiel xxii. 26, 27. Thus, saith the Lord God, remove the Diadem, & take of the Crown, this shall not be the same, exalt him that is low & abase him that is high: I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, & it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, & I will give it him. Now the aforesaid obscure Prophecy which did not take effect until the reign of David, & which suffer'd such a variety of interruptions, seemeth to have fallen under this interpretation in the day of Herod the great, whom the Jews so hated for his usurpation upon the Maccabee Levitical Family, & his general cruelties, & for which he was particularly detested by the Cabalistical Pharisees, who took up the rancor against him & his Linage, & to alienate the people from him, did then make this exposition of the prophecy: tho' I could easily imagine this to have been a contrivance; at least it is likely that Herod was not displeased with this interpretation after that the Herodians had accommodated it to him & made him the Messiah who (after their conquest & ignominy under Pompey) had restored the

Jews to a great reputation & strength, rebuilt the Temple, & found some who could deduce his pedigree from the Thigh of Jacob, as directly as David's & Solomon's.

Now this construction of the Prophecy being inculcated into the people, & into all those Jews, Strangers, or Proselytes, which resorted to Jerusalem at the great Festivals, from Alexandria, Antioch, Babylon, & all other parts where the Jews had any Colonies, there arose an universal expectation of a Messiah to come, excepting among the Herodians (who thought him already come in the person of Herod), which expectation continued among them ever after & possesseth the Jews (for our Jews are but the remains of the Pharisees) to this day.

Yet their impatience for his appearance seems not to have been at the height under Herod the great (there being no mention of false Messiahs at that time), perhaps because the Prophecy was not so clear & convincing whilst Herod was King: since under him the Scepter & Legislative power seem's to be still in Judaea, tho' sway'd by an Idumean Proselite, the Priesthood continued, the Temple flourish'd, & there was a Prince of the Sanhedrin, Rabbi Hillel of the lineage of David. But ten years after the birth of Christ, when Archelaus was banish'd to Vienna, & Judea reduced into the form of Roman Province, the Scepter then seem'd to be intirely departed from Judah; the Kingdom was now become part of the government of Syria; & ruled by a procurator, who taxed them severely; then the sense of their miseries made the people more credulous, & whether they more easily believed, what they so earnestly desired might happen, or that the malcontents (taking the advantage of their uneasiness) did then more frequently & diligently insinuate into the multitude that opinion, false Messiahs & the world was big with expectation raised in every Country by the Jews (who had received the intelligence from their common Metropolis Jerusalem), that the great Prince was coming who should establish the Jewish Monarchy, & bring peace & happiness to all the earth" (Henry Stubbe: Rise and Progress of Mahometanism, pp. 4-6).

THE IMMEDIATE HISTORICAL SETTING

"Let us consider the multitude at Babylon & in the neighbouring territories of those which went up to Jerusalem with Ezra, Nehemiah, & Zorobabel; the number was but small, & those consisting of two tribes, principally Judah & Benjamin, with four orders of the Priests & Levites.

"Josephus gives us an account how wonderfully numerous the Babylonish Jews were even in his time. He tells us that when Esdras had obtained leave from Xerxes, to go up to Jerusalem, that he sent copies of the letter to the Jews which dwelt in Media, of whom several repaired forthwith to Babylon with their effects, in order to go up with Esdras. But the rest of the Jews, Israelites (saith he), would not leave that country, so that only the two tribes of Judah & Benjamin are to be found in part of Asia and Europe, subjected to the Roman Empire; the other ten Tribes continue beyond Euphrates, being an infinite people and not to be numbered.

"This account of how ten tribes remained ought not to seem strange to such as consider how St. James writes his Catholic Epistle to the twelve, tribes which were scattered abroad, nor to such as believe that the seventy-two interpreters of the Bible were chosen out of the twelve tribes, or who give any credit to the itinerary of Benjamin Tudelensis, a Jew, who in his travels about five hundred years ago met with great numbers of those Israelites that were captivated by Salmanassar in Media and other neighbouring countries ... Besides this inestimable number of Jews, there was a multitude of Proselytes whom they continually converted to intire Judaism, their perpetual endeavours being to draw all they could to their religion: thus wee find Idumeans were made Proselytes in the daies of Hyrcanus. In the Babylonish Empire many of the Nations turned Jews (Esth. viii. 17), & the Talmudists reckon upon Nero Cesar & Antoninus Pius as Proselytes. But to evince their number better, let us learn

from Salmasius that the ordinary Jews did never use the Septuagint in their Synagogues, but that it was only made use of by the Proselyte Jews & their Posterity at Alexandria & elsewhere. The Hellenists mentioned in the Acts were no other, & the Deacons elected there to provide for the widows were of that number, one being a Proselite of Antioch. That they were Jewish Proselytes, appears from hence, that the Gospel had not then been preached to the Gentiles. How diligent the Pharisees were to engage new converts, the Gospel tells us, & to descend to after ages, which is of some importance to the subsequent discourse. Dio Cassius tells us that in the time of Adrian, when Barchochas acted the Messiah, many nations joyned with that Impostor & the Jews, so that the Whole World was in a comotion, which cannot be understood of any but entire Proselytes, for the Jews would not have mingled with others; and after that, under the Christian Emperors, our Codes & Ecclesiastical Constitutions inform us that they retain'd the custom of inveigling Proselytes. This being the condition of the Jews, and all the Nation (however dispersed) being prepared beforehand, to entertain any tidings of a Messiah who should advance the Throne of David to an universal Monarchy, 'tis not to be wondered that Christianity was so soon spread over the whole Earth. But wherein consisted this primitive Christianity which was thus diffused, certainly the principal Tenet which gained upon the Spirits of all men, was the doctrine of the coming of the Messiah. (Henry Stubbe: op. Cit.)

According to the Gospel tradition "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod, the king" (MT 2:1). Allowing for the error in the establishment of the calendar Jesus may have been about two years old when Herod died in the year 4 B.C.E.

Herod (The Great) was an Idumean Jew and this in itself was enough for the Jews to dislike him. He gave them other causes to hate him by having pagan tastes and his ruthlessness in dealing with those who opposed him or even incurred his suspicion. He had to be on the right side of the Romans to remain a king and they in turn supported him not only for his loyalty and faithfulness but also because he was a shrewd and resolute ruler. Realising where the future inevitably lay, Herod made effort to Hellenise the Jewish society both in Palestine and elsewhere in the Roman empire. In order to placate the Jews, he also undertook to rebuild the Temple on a scale more magnificent than that of any of its previous constructions.

Whatever their hatred against Herod, the Jews still preferred him and his rule under the Roman tutelage to a rather direct and ruthless rule of the Romans themselves. Being strongly monotheistic, the Jews could not reconcile themselves in calling Caesar as "Lord and Master", and to handle Roman coins having an effigy of the Caesar as well as pagan symbols. Moreover, the tribute that they paid to Herod did not go, at least directly, to a foreign empire. In the quasi-national state they were also not affronted by the presence of foreign soldiers and their heathen standards.

Death of Herod gave yet another occasion to the Romans to directly interfere in the affairs of Palestine. An imperial procurator, Sabinus, moved into Judaea to secure Herod's fortune for the Emperor. Convinced that Israel, the land of Yahweh, must be free of the rule of any earthly Lord, the Jews took up arms for national independence. Sabinus was hedged in and reinforcement had to be rushed in under the command of Varus, the Roman legate of Syria. A very large number of Jews died in the ensuing savage reprisals. Two thousand captives were crucified.

The Romans now decided to parcel out the Herodian kingdom instead of appointing Herod's son Archelaus as per Herod's wish. Archelaus was appointed to be the Ethnarch of Judaea, Samaria and Idumea and another of Herod's sons Herod Antipas as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. The third son Herod Philip was made the tetrarch of Iturea. Archelaus proved to be an incapable ruler and was deposed in 6 C.E. Judaea and Samaria were then placed under the

direct Roman rule. This was also necessitated by the presence of a constant threat from the Parthians in the east and the possibility that a local ruler might decide to switch loyalties.

Emperor Augustus then ordered a Census of the people and the economic resources of the newly annexed territories for the purpose of assessing the tribute. Quirinius, the legate of Syria was given the responsibility of conducting this Census.

According to Josephus, the pro-Roman Jewish historian of later years, a rabbi Judas of Galilee, supported by Saddok, a Pharisee, exhorted the people not to pay the tribute because this meant giving what was Yahweh's to a mortal master. Roman occupation was preached as negation of the absolute sovereignty of God over the Jews. It was Yahweh's covenant with his chosen people that he would be on their side if they remained pious and true to him. The high priests and others of the aristocracy being realists advocated pacifism in view of the great Roman might. But the more zealous ones, later to be called the Zealots, preached armed resistance. They argued that, if they succeeded, they would enjoy the consequences of their good fortune, and if they failed, they would at least have the honour and glory of having shown greatness of spirit in martyrdom.

Those who took to the desert were known as the kannaim (Greek: Zealots). The Zealots unable to make a determined stand before the powerful Roman legions waged a guerilla war against the foreign occupiers and their exploits were fervently narrated as a sort of latter-day Maccabeans. Some of the Extremists, who used curved daggers (sica) to kill aristocratic collaborators were known as the Sicarii. It is pertinent to note that the pro-Roman Josephus calls these patriots 'lestai', or bandits. Romans were ruthless and savage in dealing with their enemies. Crucifixion was a fate that every Zealot had to face on being captured. Judas and many other died thus. The fact that the Zealotism was able to operate and survive for sixty years from its founding in 6 C.E. to the fatal revolt in 66 C.E. shows the sympathy and practical support they may have received from the general populace.

The attitude of the general masses, however, wavered between the two extremes of the collaborators and the Zealots. Because of their natural timidity and desire of peace they were obliged to be submissive to the foreign rule. They, however, did have an inner urge to be free and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

THE BIRTH NARRATIVE

The New Testament starts with the enumeration "of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (MT 1:1). Thus, this sacred book of the Christians starts on the wrong foot by assigning human fathers to the one who, as they claim, had no human father!

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Em-manu-el, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife. And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS (MT 1:18-25).

Out of the four Gospels only Matthew and Luke present the story of Jesus' birth. Mark, the earliest writer, does not consider it either important enough or of any special/supernatural significance or perhaps he had not heard the story [even from Peter] or else did not accept its credibility. Matthew and Luke writing in Christianity's formative years consider his birth as a "divine impregnation". John writing at a time when doctrines were being formed and Jesus was already considered a deity presents Jesus as "the Word already was" (JN 1:1), never having a need to be born since he was always there being part of the Godhead!

Luke begins his version with the narration about birth of a child to "a certain priest named Zach-a-rias". This child would be the one whom we know as John the Baptist. The birth was announced to Zacharias by the angel Gabriel but he was apprehensive "I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years" (LK 1:18). So his wife Elisabeth conceived even in her old age. Zacharias was a priest of the Temple and therefore this must have been in Jerusalem. By the time Elisabeth was in the sixth month of her confinement "Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David and the virgin's name was Mary" (LK 1:26-27). "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of the kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible" (LK 1:31-37). This is followed by a narration of the visit of Mary to the house of Zacharias.

Mary's query to the angel "how shall this be?" is rather surprising for someone already betrothed and looking forward to having a family of her own very soon. The angel's reply "Behold, thy cousin Elisabeth she has also conceived" (LK 1:36), also does not indicate any supernatural happening because Elisabeth's pregnancy may be unusual but not anything supernatural. Zacharias too was perplexed when he was told of his wife's forthcoming pregnancy: "I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years" (LK 1:18). Abraham's wife Sarah too had exclaimed: "After I am washed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen 18:12). The angel's reply: Is anything too hard for the Lord? (Gen 18:14) is now familiar to us for it is the same reply which the angel gave to Mary. If there be nothing supernatural in the cases of Sarah and Elisabeth, could it be so in the case of Mary? Actually, in the case of Mary, young, betrothed and soon to be married, this should be a cause of excitement and not astonishment.

Obviously "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" does not mean "impregnated by the Holy Ghost". We have only to refer to 1 Sam (10:6) where Samuel tells Saul that "the spirit of the Lord will come upon thee" and indeed "the Spirit of God came on him" (1 Sam 10:10). This does not mean that Saul was to be "impregnated by the Holy Spirit" [After all nothing is impossible with God!] We must conclude that "Spirit of God shall come upon thee" can only mean "bless thee" and this is the only logical interpretation. It looks as if Mary too did not consider it as anything supernatural for she only questions and does not express disbelief as did the Shunamite woman who too had no child and her husband was old: "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid" (II Kg 4:16). [It is interesting that this child later died and was raised to life by prophet Elisha].

In Matthew's version there is no prior announcement to Mary by any angel; the angel appears to Joseph and not to Mary and that too after he had learned that Mary had already conceived. According to him "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king" (MT 2:1).

JOSEPH, THE JUST MAN

"Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily" (MT 1:18-19). Why would just man Joseph want to divorce Mary and yet not make her a public example? This would need understanding of the religious and cultural values of Joseph and his community.

According to the Jewish custom of the day the marriage of a young virgin would take place in two stages. In the first stage she was betrothed, this being an agreement of marriage in front of witnesses and payment of "mohar," the bride price. This would then be a legally ratified marriage and could be broken only by a divorce. During this period the husband was allowed to be alone with his betrothed wife and interim sexual relations could take place though not so normally. So with no witnesses to the contrary, an opportunity to have been alone would presume a sexual relationship. This was, however, not the custom in Galilee where the betrothed girl was expected not only to be virgin at betrothal but also at the time of formal, completed, marriage (consummation of) which marked the second stage when the bride went to the house of her husband. Apparently the pregnancy of Mary was discovered between betrothal and consummation. If we accept Matthew's word then Mary was found with child "before they came together".

Joseph, being a just man, must have been appalled to discover that his (betrothed) wife had conceived. We are not given the source of Joseph's information. How did he discover it?

Did Mary tell him about it? If he (and Mary) knew that he was not the father of the child then his immediate reaction would have been: Who then is the father? Was she raped? or worst still, was she seduced? Apparently he did not think that she had been a willing partner and that most likely she had been raped. In any case he was entitled to divorce her since it was generally apprehended that even the act under compulsion may have terminated with the victim's ultimate consent as according to Deut(22:24) "the damsel [was guilty], because she cried not". If the rape occurred outside of the city gate then she was not guilty because the assumption was that the "damsel cried, and there was none to save her"(Deut 22:27). Even if Joseph thought the incidence to be a case of rape, it could generate public scandal for it would be asked as to who was the rapist and why the complaint was not made earlier. For a God-fearing just man the easiest way out would be to divorce her quietly. But that too would not end the scandal as there would soon be the visible signs of pregnancy followed by the birth of a child. The only way to save Mary's reputation would be to accept that he was the father of the child. This too would be a minor scandal in Galilee as being against the Galilean custom. No wonder Matthew enacts the birth story in Bethlehem where sexual relations between the betrothed couple before consummation would not be particularly looked down upon. However, before going to Bethlehem "Joseph took unto him his wife. And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son"(MT 2:24-25). Apparently Joseph accepted the situation only after an angel confirmed to him in a dream: "that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost(MT 1:20). That makes Joseph a gullible person rather than a just man in that merely on the basis of an odd dream, without confiding even in a priest, he accepted something which on the very surface of it was plainly most illogical, without a precedent, and unthinkable for a pious Jew.

However, in order to enact the story in Bethlehem, Luke brings Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem and concocts an illogical reason of a census. Jesus would then be considered a natural son of Joseph. Luke actually records him as "Jesus the son of Joseph"(Lk3:23). There is also an insertion "as being supposed" in parenthesis which seems to be a later interpolation. If this is not an interpolation then too it would confirm that the people around him did not consider him anything but the son of Joseph. However, there is no hint anywhere in the New Testament that Joseph "adopted" Jesus as some Christian writers would like us to believe. Not that there was no provision for adoption of a son in the Jewish society. In fact in addition to the adoption of a kin, even a stranger could be accepted as a son as long as the head of the family so identified him as such. There is the example of Abraham's slave Eliezer of Damascus who would have been entitled to receive inheritance from Abraham if Abraham did not have any sons(Gen 15:3). But then it was publically known that the person was so adopted. No such perception is made in the case of Jesus.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Whether Jesus was born from the corrupt seed of Adam or by the power of the Holy Ghost overshadowing Mary is something we cannot verify from the two narrations of Matthew and Luke. If anything is possible for God, creation of Adam and Eve, or of Melchisedec without mother or father(Heb 7:3), for example, then it should be possible for Him to produce a child from a mother's womb without male intervention. The problem is that the Gospel writers do not divulge the source of their information. When and where did they get to know all this? On whose authority do they speak? How did the people react? Can we believe the narration?

From Luke(4:22) we learn that by the people of his own town Jesus was called the son of Joseph the Carpenter(MK 6:3). John(6:42) records that the Jews were saying: "surely this is Jesus; we know his father and mother". His own brothers do not seem to consider him something

other than a normal human being. Apparently they too were unaware of his miraculous birth which must have been kept a very closely guarded secret. Joseph died when Jesus was still young. So Mary, and only she, could have divulged the secret. Someone else, Mary's cousin Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, apparently is the only person with whom Mary may have confided with as is indicated by Luke's narration. However, there is no indication if she thought the pregnancy itself was something unusual or super-natural even though she sings a magnificent in honour of Mary and her yet-to-be-born holy child.

The Jews were quick to ridicule Jesus' Galilean, and thus provinciale, origin: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth"(JN 1:46); "Study the Scriptures and you will find that prophets do not come from Galilee"(JN 7:52). For once they could be wrong for Jonah did come out of Galilee. It could be that Jonah being a minor prophet, the Gospel writer himself did not know about him and so entered this remark in ignorance. Nevertheless this underlines how particular the Jews were in such matters. They did not consider Maccabees as fit to be kings, inspite of their heroic leadership in the beginning of their rule, since they were not of the kingly line. Both Matthew and Luke take particular care to present Jesus' genealogies, for that is what the Jews would demand to establish entitlement before they would accept anyone to be a Messiah.

It is also to emphasise Mary's unblemished virtue that Luke makes the angel tell Mary: "Thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women"(LK1:28). This is to emphasise that Mary had been especially chosen for that unusual role! No where in the Gospels the Jews question Mary's piety and chastity. No where in the New Testament do they ridicule Jesus' "unknown paternity" irrespective of his "adoption" by Joseph. Had they any doubt they would have not only ridiculed him, they would have outcast him and forbidden him to go even near a synagogue. For it is written that "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord"(Deut 23:2). Yet Jesus had been openly teaching in the synagogues and even in the Temple itself. His paternity was never in doubt.

Joseph and Mary were virtuous, religious, and righteous people. Had they felt any problem about Jesus' paternity they would have consulted some priest about it. Yet they somehow kept it a secret. Who then divulged this secret? If Mary did after all open her mouth, then this could have been one thing about her that would surely have been recorded that should have electrified the whole region. Yet we remain in the dark. Only two of the four Gospels mention the nativity; the other two do not make any mention of this most extraordinary phenomenon. Paul too ignores it in his epistles. Every other writer in the New Testament emphasises his death rather than the birth(MT 1:18, 20)

It is worth noting that while Matthew specifically states that Mary "was found with child of the Holy Ghost before they came together"(MT 1:18) and Joseph "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son"(MT 1:25), Luke is rather luke- warm stating only that "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall over-shadow thee"(LK 1:35). This could mean anything. Mary's question: "How shall this be seeing I know not a man?"(LK 1:34) also seems rather odd for a woman soon to be married. To make the matter clear Luke had to make the angel say: "With God nothing shall be impossible"(LK 1:37). After all, the case of Elisabeth had already plentifully demonstrated the power of God in making a barren woman of her advanced age pregnant. This was a repeat of a similar case already recorded in the Old Testament where Sara; the wife of Abraham conceived Isaac in her advance age after similar visit by some angels(Gen ch. 18,21).

There is also a question as to why should Mary, an unwedded virgin, accompany Joseph on his journey to Bethlehem if she was only betrothed to him(LK 2:5). It was not needed for

census purposes and Jewish custom would not favour it. They must have already been married in order to make any sense of the journey. She must have been in her advanced stage of her pregnancy so that she gave birth to Jesus soon after arrival in Bethlehem. Her pregnancy must therefore be showing by the time she left Nazareth and it would certainly have been extremely odd if she was not yet married. It is through Matthew's confirmation that on the bidding of the angel of the Lord that Joseph "took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son"(MT 1:24,25) that we learn that Mary was not just "betrothed" as stated by Luke, but rather the wife of Joseph when they travelled together.

The phenomenon of "virgin birth" was nothing new in the Gentile cultures among whom Christianity was taking root at the time the Gospels were being written. In typical Greek tradition magical impregnation by gods was quite common place and could be attributed to any great hero or wonder-worker alongwith the title of a god. In the Roman tradition as well, the twin brothers Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, are stated to be of virgin birth. Their mother, Silvia, was, also a vestal virgin! The Persian sun-god Mithra was also divinely conceived by a virgin and was born in a cave on 25th December where shepherds attended him and regaled him with gifts. Mithraists celebrated Baptism, Confirmation, as well as Eucharist (eating bread and wine as a token of the body and blood of Mithra). Interestingly, the Vatican, the seat of the Pope of the Catholic Church, is situated where the temple of Mithra was once located.

The ancient Babylonian god Tammuz, known to the Greeks as Adonis (Adon: Lord) was believed to have been born of a virgin on 25th December he was slain and buried in a Tomb, leaving it vacant with the rock at the entrance rolled aside, spent three days in Hades (Hell) and then permitted by the gods of the underworld to be resurrected. The Greek sun-god Bacchus (Dionysus) too was born of a virgin named Demeter after she was impregnated by Jupiter without any carnal act. He too went into hell after death and was later resurrected. The Phrygian god Attis was born of a virgin mother named Nana as the "only begotten son" of the Most High Cybele. Having died he rose to life on 24th March (Easter!). His believers too practiced Baptism and Eucharist.

Similarly, the Egyptian sun-god was born of "the virgin of the world" on 29th December. He too had twelve disciples. One of whom Typhone betrayed him to his slayers. He too remained in Hell for three days and became Divine Incarnate. The Hindu god Krishna (KRSNA) was born of a Devaki (Temple virgin) as the "only begotten son" of the Most High without human intervention. He was also born in a cave. He was slain and the sun was darkened at noon. After his death he descended into Hell and then ascended bodily into Heaven. He is the third person of the Hindu Trinity as God Incarnate and will judge the dead on the Last Day. Confucius too was born in a cave. Horus, the son of Isis in the Egyptian mythology was also brought up secretly in the marshes of the Delta out of reach of Set.

No wonder, in the prevailing environment Jesus' miraculous birth was unquestionably accepted by Paul's followers. This still leaves us wondering why Paul himself totally ignored the miracle of Jesus' birth. Was he playing down the event for fear of the Jewish rebuttal or was the whole story a later concoction?

Virgin birth itself is not a manifest miracle. It would have been really a spectacular miracle of "God" had incarnated Himself as a fully grown youth and then offered Himself as a Paschal Lamb for the redemption of the sins of mankind. Why waste 30-33(or more) years in the process of maturing? Why was this not done in the early history of mankind?

THE IRRELEVANT "PROPHECY"

It is interesting to note that the word "virgin" used in KJV and many other versions of the Bible is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word "almah", a young woman. Hebrew word for an "untouched virgin" is "bethulah". The original "prophecy" of Isaiah(7:14,15) as per KJV is: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Im-manu-el. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good". Matthew looking for a "prophecy" plucked the verse out of its context. Realizing this error many modern translation now use the correct translation in the text of Isaiah itself but retain the word "virgin" in the text of Matthew. After all Matthew had himself so specified albeit wrongly possibly on the basis of a mis-translation of the Hebrew word "bethulah" as "virgin" in the Greek translation available to Matthew(and even Luke) and they in their enthusiasm built their stories on wrong premises. The listing below will be of interest:

ISAIAH 7:14		MATTHEW 1:23
	<u>King James</u>	A virgin shall be with child, and bear a son.
A virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son.	<u>New International</u>	The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son.
The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son.	<u>Revised Berkeley</u>	The virgin will be with child and shall bear a son.
The virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son.	<u>New American Standard</u>	The virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son.
A virgin will be with child and bear a son	<u>New English Bible</u>	The virgin will conceive and she will bear a son.
A young woman is with child and bear a son.	<u>Revised Standard Version</u>	A Virgin shall conceive and bear a son.
A young woman shall conceive and she will bear a son.	<u>The Good News Bible</u>	A virgin will become pregnant and have a son.
A young woman who is pregnant will have a son.*		
	<u>New World Translation</u>	The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son.
The maiden herself will actually become pregnant and she is giving birth to a son.	<u>The Jerusalem Bible</u>	The virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son
The maiden is with child and shall give birth to a son		

*Footnote: "The Hebrew word here translated "young woman" is not the specific term for virgin, but refers to any young woman of marriageable age. The use of virgin in MT 1:23 reflects a Greek translation of the Old Testament, made some 500 years after Isaiah.

The story of a "virgin" giving birth to someone called Immanuel (or Emmanuel) needs elaboration since it plays a very important role in the mythology about Jesus, and his birth and Messiah-ship.

During the time of the Hebrew prophet ISAIAH, the kingdoms of Israel and Syria were trying to forge an alliance against menacing and powerful Assyria. They were trying to enlist the kingdom of Judah on their side. AHAAZ, king of Judah, was inclined to join the other side, the more powerful Assyrians. Isaiah, however, felt that this would mean the overlordship of the Assyrians and their religion and, therefore, advised neutrality. He even advanced a divine sign: "... Behold, a maiden shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste" (Isa 7:14-16). Isaiah then predicts that Judah will then become a land of milk (curds) and honey i.e. a very prosperous nation indeed. With regard to the original prophecy the message was clear: God will look after the kingdom of Judah and make it prosper. All Ahaz had to do was to remain neutral. Ahaz did see the logic of it, supported by the promise of a sign. This was to be within the "next couple of years". He would hardly be interested in what would be happening seven centuries later. Butter and honey shall everyone eat that is left in the now safe nation (Isa 7:22).

It is worth pointing out that no where in the New Testament Jesus is named, nicknamed or referred to as Immanuel. If Immanuel's literal meaning, God with us, is to be taken, even then it is negated by Jesus' crucifixion and his cry at the Cross "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachtani" (My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me). Furthermore eating of curds and honey (RBV, NIV), Butter and Honey (KJV, NWT), milk and honey (GNB) is never associated with Jesus as a qualification.

In the very next chapter Isaiah gives the name of another child "Maher-shalal-hash-baz", which translated means "haste-spoil, speed-booty". He prophesied that before the child could say "Papa or Mama", the two kingdoms of Syria and Israel will lay desolate. As it happened the Assyrians swept over Syria and almost destroyed Israel, but granting the latter a respite which lasted just about ten years. Judah which remained neutral remained safe. Isaiah's prophesied names, however, do not appear for real persons anywhere in the Bible.

Isaiah made several prophecies, most of which told Jews to look forward to good times: "A child is born to us! and he will be our ruler. He will be called, "Wonderful Counsellor", "Mighty God", "Eternal Father", "Prince of Peace". His royal power will continue to grow; his kingdom will always be at peace. He will rule as King David's successor basing his power on right and justice, from now until the end of time. The Lord Almighty is determined to do all this (Isa 9:6,7). "The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David's descendants" (Isa 11:1).

THE CASE OF TWO GENEALOGIES

Matthew and Luke give two very different genealogies of Jesus. Matthew's genealogy lists 14 generations from Abraham to David, then starts again with David to count 14 generations upto "deportation", so that from that time onward there is another set of 14 generations from Jechoniah (or Jeconiah, or Coriah, choose what you will) to Jesus. There is no apparent reason for manipulation to count 14. Perhaps Matthew was trying to highlight that something very special was destined to happen after every 14th generation. However, in order

to fit this number 14 Matthew counts David twice, once at the end of the first group of 14 and then against the head of the next group of 14.

GENEALOGY From DAVID TO JESUS

According to MATTHEW 1:6-16	According to LUKE 3:23-31.
1. DAVID	1. DAVID
2. SOLOMON	2. NATHAN
3. ROBOAM	3. MATTATHA
4. ABIA	4. MENAN
5. ASA	5. MELEA
6. JOSAPHAT	6. ELIAKIM
7. JORAM	7. JONAN
8. OZIAS	8. JOSEPH
9. JOATHAM	9. JUDA
10. ACHAZ	10. SIMEON
11. EZEKIAS	11. LEVI
12. MANASSES	12. MATTHAT
13. AMON	13. JORIM
14. JOSIAS	14. ELIEZER
1. JECHONIAS	15. JOSE
2. SALATHIEL	16. ER
3. ZOROBABEL	17. ELMODAM
4. ABIUD	18. COSAM
5. ELIAKIM	19. ADDI
6. AZOR	20. MELCH
7. SADOE	21. NERI
8. ACHIM	22. SALATHIEL
9. ELIUD	23. ZOROBABEL
10. ELEAZAR	24. RHESA
11. MATTHAN	25. JOANNA
12. JACOB	26. JUDA
13. JOSEPH	27. JOSEPH
14. JESUS	28. SEMEI
	29. MATTATHIAS
	30. MAATH
	31. NAGGE
	32. ESLI
	33. NAUM
	34. AMOS
	35. MATTATHIAS
	36. JOSEPH
	37. JANNA
	38. MELCHI
	39. LEVI
	40. MATTHAT
	41. HELI
	42. JOSEPH
	43. JESUS

Starting the third group of 14 with Jechoniah also has a special significance. David had been promised by God the right of kingship to Solomon and through him to his progeny. But in due course God pronounced a curse on Jechoniah: "Thus saith the Lord, 'write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah'" (Jere 22:30). The curse had been inherited by him because of his father Jehoiaquim's burning of the roll of prophecy (Jere 36:23,30). According to the current belief the expected MESSIAH was to be from the seed of

David to sit on his throne. If Jechoniah could not have one of his seed fulfill that requirement then some other route needed trying. So Luke(3:23-38) came out with an entirely different line of ancestors bypassing the whole list as quoted by Matthew. Interestingly his list included 42(3x14) from David to Jesus. The list starts with Jesus... the son, as people thought, of Joseph, son of Heli... Son of David and then proceeds to Abraham, son of Terah on to Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

THE DIVINE SOLUTION

Christian writers faced with this glaring discrepancy between the two genealogies try to explain it by saying that in fact Luke's genealogy is not that of Joseph's but that of Mary herself and that Jesus was in fact in the Davidic line through Mary as well. This would ward away the divine curse on Jechoniah in an ingenious way explained in the following steps:

1. If Mary is supposed to be of the line of David then Jesus was a descendant of David, albeit through a woman. However, her line not being the kingly line, he could not be the contender to the throne of David.
2. Had Jesus been the real son of Joseph, the husband of Mary, he would then be entitled to claim the throne. This could not happen because of the divine curse on the line of Jechoniah, one of Joseph's forefathers.
3. So, being (of virgin birth) through Mary and having been the "adopted" son of Joseph he was now legally entitled to David's throne and could also sit on it being of the line of David and having by-passed the curse which he did not inherit being not from Jechoniah's line but out of Mary's line.

(William McDonald: Thy Word is Truth, Emmaus Bible Correspondence School).

A divine plan indeed! But it seems to be an obvious after-thought for had this been the case at least one of the two evangelists would have taken pains to explain to justify the claim of Jesus to the throne. For ordinary people it was enough that Jesus was son of Joseph who was of the line of David. There are also several snags to this "divine" solution. Firstly, these genealogies give 12 ancestors to Joseph and 41 to Mary to reach David. Such a large demographic variation within a small region is hard to comprehend. We could have a slight margin of a couple of generations but not of the order of 12:41.

Secondly, Mary was most probably a Levite, being a cousin of Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. It is reputed that Mary's father was a priest named Joachim (although later Christian writings made him a descendant of David) and that before her betrothal to Joseph she had been devoted as a VIRGIN in the Temple at Jerusalem. Only Levites were allowed to serve in the Temple(Source: Variant Version of the Gospel of the Birth of Mary).

Thirdly, Luke who is supposed to be narrating Mary's genealogy does not even mention her own name. Rather it is Matthew, who is supposed to be writing Joseph's genealogy, is the one that mentions her name: "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary"(MT 1:16). What if Matthew was writing Mary's genealogy and Luke that of Joseph's? After all here was Luke writing: "Jesus...the son, as people thought, of Joseph, son of Heli..."(LK 3:23) making it more likely to be Joseph's genealogy. Yet it is stated to be the other way around! In any case the two genealogies record two different names of Joseph's own father, but then one of them could be his father-in-law! Yet Mary's father's name was neither Heli nor Jacob!

In any case if Jesus was really born of a "virgin" having no father then he did not belong to any line, as per reckoning of the Jews, and was not entitled to sit on the throne of David, nor

did he actually sit on it. In passing we may note that Elijah, Elisha and other non-Judaean prophets do not mention a Messiah out of David! As it happened, the historical Jesus of the Gospels was persecuted, flogged, spat on, deserted by his friends and followers, and supposedly died on the cross, shattering the Jewish dream of a Messiah forever. In fact the Jewish nation was the worse off after his death. His believers, the Christians have been their worst persecutors for almost two thousand years. Instead of IMMANUEL (or EMMANVEL), it has been MAHER-SHALAL HASH-BAZ for them. This being a difficult word does not appear in the Gospels or anywhere else in the New Testament.

There are several other discrepancies within the genealogies. Matthew mentions: "Josaphat begot Joran; and Joran begot Ozias"(MT 1:8). In actual fact between Joram(or Jehoram) were three generations: Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah(II Chr Ch 22, 24 and 25). Then again: "Josias begot Jechonias and his brother, about the time they were carried away to Babylon"(MT 1:11). In actual fact(II Chr Ch. 36) Josiah was followed on his throne by his sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim(or Eliakim). Jechonia was the son of Jehoiakim whose act of burning the Word of God had caused the curse to fall on his seed(Jere 36:23,30). Incidentally it was in Josias' reign that Hilkiyah, the high priest had found a copy of the book of Law. It seems that in his enthusiasm with the number 14 Matthew deliberately manipulated with names.

The notion of genealogy by Luke being that of Mary is obviously a later explanation. The differences between two genealogies have perplexed many a scribe. In one of the most venerable texts, the Sixth Century CODEX BEZAE CANTABRI GIENSIS the scribe noticing the differences put Matthew's version of the genealogy into that of Luke's but because of Matthew's containing fewer names he put in extra ones to make it longer. This is not the only case of scribes taking liberties with the "original" inspired text. Nor was this the only case of people even in early periods noticing the obvious discrepancy. St. Augustine, for example, revolted against such problems with the "holy writ" and rejected Christianity in his youth. [It is only after he was convinced that faith need not be factually based that he returned to Christianity]. Apparently the "divine solution" had not yet been discovered as it was put forward by later apologists.

Paul specifically told Timothy: "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions"(I Tim 1:3-4). He also told Titus "to avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and void"(Tit 3:9). Long before the Chronicler had proclaimed "The genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright"(I Chr 5: 1). But here we have two of the four Gospels spelling out confounding genealogies to establish Jesus' claim to the throne of King David.

THE CALUMNY

In the previous discussion opinion has been expressed on the basis of the Gospel narratives that the Jews did not make any allegations of illegitimacy about Jesus at least during his lifetime. This is not to say that they did not do so after his "crucifixion and ascension". As soon as the "Christians" became a direct challenge to Judaism itself, the Jews must have made a laughing stock of the concept of "virgin birth" claimed in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Since they did not accept the very idea of divine impregnation, to them Jesus was either a legitimate son of Joseph, or illegitimately conceived outside of Joseph/Mary marriage. If the "Christians" were willing to give up the legitimacy claim, albeit in favour of the "preposterous" divine impregnation, Jews were all too ready to slander "the imposter" they considered Jesus to be. They even concocted the name of a Roman soldier as the alleged rapist

seducer. We need not dwell into this maliciously scandalous allegation obviously made deliberately by the Jews to ridicule their antagonists."

Since we have opted to discard the ridiculous slander of illegitimacy, we are now left with the two obvious options of divine impregnation or Joseph's biological fatherhood. The question arises as to why is it necessary to establish that Jesus did not have a human father. The mainstream Christians explain that it was necessary for Jesus to be born without the intervention of a human male so as to be the Saviour. This is rooted in the concept of "Original Sin" and the need for an unblemished sacrifice.

The concept of the "Original Sin" is derived from the topsy turvy narration in the Genesis: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them"(Gen. 1:27). This would give the impression that male and female were created at the same time. Yet, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"(Gen 2:7). "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden...and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"(Gen 2:15-18). "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs.....and the rib.....made he a woman, and brought her unto the man"(Gen 2:21,22)....."and they shall be one flesh"(Gen 2:24). But the "serpent" tempted the woman to eat the forbidden fruit telling her that "Ye shall not surely die.....ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.....she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat"(Gen 3:4-6).

It seems the "Lord God" was having a walk in the Garden and looking for Adam and called out "Where art thou?" After the "Lord God" found out why Adam was hiding (we do not yet know if the Woman was also hiding), he told the Woman: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of all the days of thy life"(Gen 3:16,17). "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever"(Gen 3:22). They were then banished from the Garden of Eden. According to the Christian doctrine the transgression of Adam and Eve is the "Original Sin" and because of it all the generations of Adam and Eve have inherited the curse of Lord God to live and suffer on the earth. Something is therefore needed to atone for the original sin before the mankind can return to the bliss of the Garden of Eden.

It is noteworthy that man was formed out of the dust of the ground and the Garden was somewhere "eastward in Eden"(Gen 2:8). And a river went out of Eden which parted into four heads: Pison in the land of Havilah, Gihon in the land of Ethiopia, Hiddekel toward east of Assyria and the fourth is Euphrates. Thus the whole story was enacted right here on earth. The haphazard creation of the universe, the creation of Adam and the Woman, God walking in the Garden looking for Adam, His being jealous of Adam's becoming "as one of us" and being apprehensive of his living forever and God repenting his mistake of creating man(Gen 6:6) smacks of primitive folklore. Even with the commital of sin the man did not die as was warned

*As opposed to the lukewarm, defensive, apologetic narration of the Gospels, the Holy Quran is a forthright and forceful way debunks any suspicion on the character of the Virgin Mary and confirms her piety and righteousness.

by Lord God(Gen 2:17). On the other hand what the Serpent(Satan) told the Woman "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" was more true.

If the "Original Sin" was to be inherited then it should pass through Eve, the Woman, rather than through Adam, the man. Eve was the first transgressor and the vehicle of transmission of temptation to Adam. According to Paul "It was not Adam who was deceived, it was the woman who was deceived and broke the law"(I Tim 2:14). It is her "seed" that Lord God talks about in Gen 3:15. Thus, if there be an Original Sin then it should pass to "the seed" through the Woman. Mary's offspring, however divinely conceived, could not avoid being "corrupted" or been born devoid of a sinful nature. "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?"(Job 25:4). It is significant that Jesus calls himself "Son of Man". In Gen 6:4 the men are called Sons of God whereas the women are called the Daughters of men. If the Messiah was to have a Heavenly Father, then why not a Heavenly Mother?

However we look at it, in the biblical narration the woman is given a lower status than man. Even in her divine conception Mary remains a passive unconcerned receptive of the Spirit: "I am the Lord's servant; may it happen to me as you have said"(LK 1:35). Matthew does not consider her worthy even for the visit of the angel.

In a scheme of things where only the Will of God is to prevail, what tribute is it to Jesus if he was or was not conceived through the participation of a biological father? We have already cited the cases of Adam and Eve. Adam was made out of dust and Eve from a rib of Adam. These are hardly any personal tributes. The credit goes to the Creator and not to the created. Jesus or his mission are not affected either way.

THE FOUR SHADY WOMEN

As we learn from the Gospels Jesus was never ridiculed about the circumstances of his birth. Yet it is perplexing as to why does Matthew mention four women in his genealogy, all four being of shady pasts according to the biblical narration! All the four were non-Israelite women brought into Israel through marriage. TAMAR was the one who played a whore to her own father-in-law and begot the twins Perez(Pharez) and Zarah(Gen. Ch.38). RAHAB was a harlot herself before being married to Joshua who succeeded Moses(Josh Ch 2,6). The story of RUTH who engaged herself in a shameless sexual exploitation as told in the Book of Ruth. BEERSHEBA, the wife of Uriah, was the one with whom King David is said to have committed adultery(II Sam 11).

The story of TAMAR is that of a legitimated illegitimacy. RAHAB's claim to salvation is through repentance and conversion. By her treachery to her own nation she came to the help of the Israelites. RUTH risks a scandal to achieve what she wants. BEERSHEBA is shown as colourless, passive and pathetic in the whole, allegedly immoral, episode. Accusation of improper sexual conduct is actually made in the case of Tamar, implicit in the case of Rahab, avoided in the case of Ruth by the secrecy of her husband Boaz, and leveled in Beersheba's case against her partner in adultery. All are social misfits but the situation of all four are righted by the actions of their men legitimising them and their children-to-be. There is, however, no direct divine intervention, no miracles. Matthew actually misses to mention the divine intervention in the birth of Isaac to Sarah/Sarah, the aged wife of Abram/Abraham. Luke is the one who brings in the similar story of Elisabeth, the wife of Zechariah.

It is difficult to read into the mind of the Gospel writer Matthew but it seems that in bringing in the names of these four not-so-enviable women Matthew was trying to play down the Jewish slander started after Jesus' "crucifixion and ascension". It seems as if Matthew was telling the accusing Jews that their history had other women in similar situation, so why

ridicule Jesus. Joseph the husband of Mary, is shown as playing a positive role as by their husbands in the cases of the four women cited in the genealogy, and if their situations could be righted then why not Mary's.

Our own conclusion, as already discussed above, is that the gift of life vests not in men or women, but in the Almighty God. Jesus' genealogy is of no affect on his claim to be the MESSIAH. Nor is it of any value in the Christian blasphemy that he was the Son of God. It is, however, surprising that instead of forcefully endorsing the pious nature of Virgin Mary Matthew (as well as Luke) takes a rather ambiguous and defensive position. The Church has had considerable difficulty explaining its position and has often come up with the "moral" of the story that even "sinners" have a chance to repent and be saved. "So all sins, even those comitted through weakness after conversion, are forgiven by Christ's great sacrifice. It is an ongoing process"(The Plain Truth magazine, March 1992, pp.5).

YEAR OF THE LORD

While it is impossible to verify Jesus' human paternity we could verify the authenticity of various other accounts related in the narration of the birth itself. Both Matthew and Luke state a number of natural and historical events which could be ascertained from actual history of the period. If they could be erroneous, could their narration of the secrets of nativity be correct?

In the Roman times events were dated from the legendary year in which the city of Rome had been founded. That year was 1 Anno Urbe Condita("from the founding of the city") or 1.A.U.C. Unfortunately, however, neither Matthew nor Luke give us the actual date of birth of Jesus. With all the other details and attempts at indicating the period they could not have thought that it was unimportant. After all they do mention "in the days of Herod the king"(MT 2:1) and "in those days ... a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed ... when Cyrenius was governor of Syria"(LK 2:1,2). It seems the Gospel writers were unsure themselves and could not afford to be exact with the hearsay or secondary information at their disposal.

We now know that Herod became king in 716 AUC and died in 749 AUC or in the year 4 B.C.E. that is four years before Jesus is generally understood to have been born! If Jesus was born in the days of Herod the king, then Herod could not have died before Jesus was born. To be fair to the evangelists who wrote the Gospels, this is not their fault as the real fault lies with our common calendar which was devised in the sixth century C.E. by an Italian monk named Dionysius Exiguus. Through his misunderstanding of the years of Herod's reign the error crept in and has been carried ever since.

As for Cyrenius (original Quirinius), there indeed was an important Roman official of that name in the reign of Caesar Augustus who was posted in Syria between 6 to 4 B.C.E. and 6 to 9 C.E. Most knowledgeable people agree that Jesus could not have been born in the second period and, therefore, other doubts excepted, Jesus could have been born between 6 to 4 B.C.E. if the events are really matched as stated.

In ancient times censuses were generally carried out for the purposes of military draft or levying of taxes, both purposes being unpopular and considered a work of Satan because of the trouble they brought on the people: "And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel"(I Chr 21:1). The Census ordered by Quirinius was, however, held in the second term of his office and "Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed and all his followers were scattered"(Acts 5:37). This apparently happened after Jesus was born. It is possible that Luke only vaguely related the

otherwise inconspicuous event of the birth of Jesus to the important landmark of the Census. In any case even if Jesus was born after the death of Herod the Great it is not understood why Joseph and Mary had to travel out of Herod Antipas' realm (Galilee) to the Roman-occupied territory (Judaea). If taxes were to be paid then these were to be paid to the Herodian, and not Roman, officials. The Census was not held in Galilee any way.

Had it been only the period that we were interested in, we could well afford to ignore it as an ancient device for approximately timing the events. But the problem is exaggerated when Luke brings Joseph and Mary from the town of Nazareth to the city of David called Bethlehem for the purpose of this very census, which would be a farfetched invention. Imagine the whole population of Palestine (Idumea, Judah, Samaria, etc.) criss-crossing all over the country from the place of their abode to the city of their ancestors. No wonder there was no room for the holy family in the inn. The Romans could not be discredited with conducting such a census requiring people to leave their places of normal abode to the cities of their ancestors only to be counted and to pay taxes. An obviously better way would be to tax people where they were and where their possessions could be easily verified and taxed accordingly. To make people travel long distances and thus clogging the roads at a time when there was general disturbance and, moreover, Parthians were testing their power at the edges of the Roman empire, would be a military blunder. Joseph and Mary could not have been travelling at the time of the Census with Mary in her advanced state of pregnancy. A lesser evil but a possible practicality would be to order everyone to "go back to your place of abode" to be taxed. But then this would mean that Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem which the Gospels (or at least Luke) themselves seem unwilling to accept. This would mean the Holy Family already living in Bethlehem, no need to travel, no need for the holy child being born in a stable in a manger, etc. But how else could the prophecy be fulfilled: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Mic 5:2)? The Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem and somehow Jesus had to be born there and Luke seems to be making sure of that by bringing Mary from Nazareth in the Galilee to Bethlehem in Judah in the south. Oddly, there is no indication of any others of Joseph's relatives travelling with him to Bethlehem, nor any of them being present at the time of the birth of the child.

From Matthew's version we understand as if Joseph and Mary were actually living in Bethlehem, then went into Egypt with the new born baby and returned after Herod's death to settle in Nazareth not by choice but for safety consideration and to fulfill another "prophecy": "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (MT 2:23). This is quite the opposite direction to that taken by Luke apparently because each evangelist was exploiting a different "prophecy".

An overwhelming body of evidence indicates that Nazareth did not exist in biblical times. The town is unlikely to have appeared before the third century. 'Jesus of Nazareth', as most biblical scholars would now readily concur, is a mistranslation of the original Greek phrase 'Jesus the Nazorean'. This does not denote any locality. Rather, it refers to Jesus' membership in a specific group or sect with a specific religious and/or political orientation the 'Nazorean Party', as certain modern experts call it.

The whole story of the Census (Taxing) and the need for the Holy Family having to travel for that purpose is questionable on many other grounds. Joseph was David's descendant at least 41 generations removed (according to Luke) and demographically speaking this procedure would require several millions of David's descendants to come to Bethlehem. There is no such historical evidence nor do the Gospels themselves indicate beyond that the local inn

was crowded but still the Holy Family could find a place at least in the stable. The new born was placed in a manger when the shepherds visited him(LK 2:16). This itself is surprising because Joseph could have had some relatives, friends or acquaintance with whom he could have lodged his family under the special circumstances. In fact Matthew does indicate that the Magi visited him in a "house"(MT 2:11).

According to Luke: "And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn"(2:7). The association with "manger" has given rise to the misunderstanding that "because there was no room in the inn holy family was housed in a stable". The Greek word translated here as "inn" is actually "KATALUMA", a place for loosing-down, a resting place, a room. Thus we may reinterpret: "Because there was no space in the room(for the crib), they brought in a manger and laid the baby in it". The "inn" has been brought in by the translators to make it parallel to Zipporah's child(Moses' son) being circumcised in an "inn"(EX 4:25).

THE ADORATION AND THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

As soon as the holy child was born the herald angels seem to have gone around announcing the great event. According to Luke: "There were in the same country shepherds, staying in the fields... and an angel stood by them...and said to them...today there was born to you in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord"(LK 2:8-10). The shepherds then travelled to Bethlehem and paid homage to the new born Christ.

According to Matthew the story is more elaborate: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. Saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou Bethlehem, In the land of Juda, are not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way"(MT 2:1-12).

These wise men are generally known as the Magi. These are supposed to be priest-astrologers. We shall not comment on how far the story is correct but let it be explained that the myth of the movement of the "star" must have been developed at some later stage. Many speculations have been made in the Christian world as to the nature of this star. Some think it was a nova, others think it may have been a comet moving toward a specific direction. Halley's Comet, for example, made its appearance in 11 B.C.E. It has also been speculated that in 7 B.C.E. Jupiter and Saturn approached each other quite closely and their combined light of the

conjunction may have been unusually bright. But all these happened outside the reign of Quirinius!

"The heart and core of the star controversy goes beyond matters of astronomy. To one who believes that the Bible is the Word of God and is to be taken at face value, the account of the star in Matthew's gospel can have only one explanation. It was clearly and incontrovertibly a miracle, of supernatural, not natural origin! What natural phenomenon in the heavens whether comet, meteor, exploding star or planet, could "go before" the Magi and "stand over" a specific house(MT. 2:9-11) to precisely pinpoint it? And if it was attributable to a non-miraculous agency, then how can we account that it appeared and reappeared to the Magi and apparently went generally unnoticed by others? "Natural explanations are sheer astronomical foolishness! If the biblical account cannot be accepted in all its details, why should anyone believe it has any merit at all?"(Keith W. Stump, *Jesus' Birth: The Untold Story, THE PLAIN TRUTH*, November/December, 1985). That is exactly our point! With every, or almost every historical and physical element disproving the Gospel narration, how can we have any faith in them? It is interesting that the above-quoted author after emphasising acceptance of Gospel narration in all its details concedes that "it is quite possible that the Star of Bethlehem was simply an angel sent to lead the Magi to Jesus, since the Bible often symbolically uses stars to signify angels (Job 38:7; Jude 13; Rev. 1:20,9:1, 12:4;etc.)" By conceding this the author gives vent to his own doubts! If the story of the Magi has any truth in it then the "star" that these astrologers saw was in their horoscopes and not in the sky.

SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying: In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not"(MT 2:16-18).

The story of the Wise Men and the slaughter of the innocent children raises many interesting questions. If these wise men were really wise and could foretell the future and had the bright star as their guiding light then why should they go right into the lion's den as Herod's court would be for the new born infant? Herod's reaction to the birth of a challenger to his throne was but natural. Small wonder that he did what he did. The Messiah, the Hope of Israel, would be hailed by the Jews and suddenly Herod would be considered a usurper in the eyes of all pious Jews. Herod would be foolish not to take a pre-emptive action. But one wonders, as to why did he not take an immediate action? Why did he not send one of his own officials to accompany the wise men in order to pay suitable "homage" to the tiny challenger? — and do away with the challenge once for all?

As we are told in verse 16 Herod ordered the killing of all the children in Bethlehem "from two years old and under". If Luke's version has any fabric of truth, Joseph and Mary came from Nazareth and therefore an obvious course for them would be for them to move back to their own city as soon as possible after the Census. The Wise Men must, therefore, catch up with them soon after nativity. In fact the date of the visit by Magi or the wise Men, the EPIPHANY, is celebrated on January 6 which is within two weeks of the supposed date of birth of Jesus. Why should Herod order the killing of children as old as two years knowing well that Jesus, the possible Messiah, was only a few days old yet? Or, did he wait two years before ordering the slaughter?(By that time he may well have been dead himself). It seems the evangelist was

trying to inflate the number and the obvious way to do was to spread the net wider to include even older children to make the number large. After all, Bethlehem was a small town and how many new born babies would be there to kill. Increase the age limit and you may have a respectable number to quote.

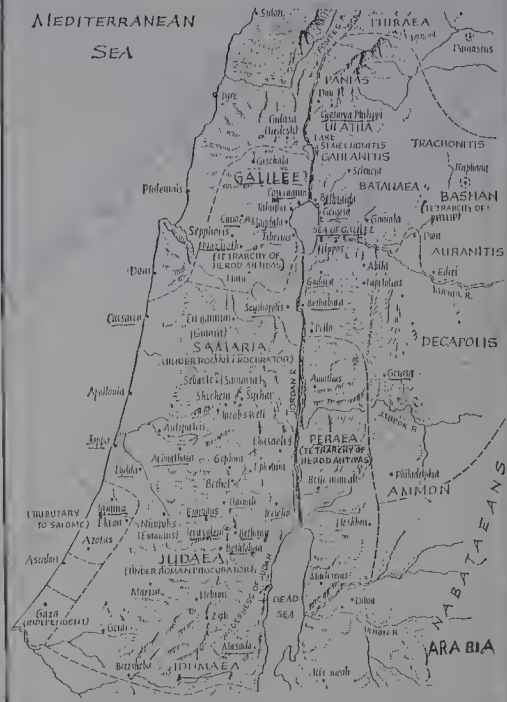
The quotation from Jeremiah regarding lamentation of Rachel is also not very apt. Leah, and not Rachel, was the ancestress of the Judeans and the children of Bethlehem were Judeans. The original "prophecy" places Rachel in Ramah which was in the Benjamite territory. The original context of Jeremiah's passage is with regard to the carrying off of Israel into exile by Sargon. The evangelist in order to find a biblical prophecy brings in an irrelevant prophecy. Such over-zealous quotation of so-called prophecies is not unusual with Gospel writers. Some scribe found one of the sayings of Isaiah(1:3) — The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib — which he thought could be used as a "prophecy. So he added to the nativity story "An ox and an ass worshipped him. Then was fulfilled that was said through the prophet Isaiah". The copy of this interpolated Gospel is commonly known as "Pseudo-Matthew".

The slaughter story takes us back once again to our investigation into Jesus' year of birth. Jesus was born before Herod died. Josephus the famous Jewish historian of the first century C.E. in his book (Antiquities of the Jews, book XVII, Chapter VI) tells us of an eclipse of the moon late in Herod's reign. From "Solar and Lunar Eclipses of the Ancient Near East" by Kudleck and Mickler we learn that the lunar eclipse in question occurred on March 13, 4 B.C.E. Soon after the eclipse Herod was afflicted with a painful and loathsome disease and went to have bath in hot springs beyond Jordan river with disappointing results. In his frustrated state he caused a number of prominent Jews to die, including his own son Antipater. All these must have taken several months. Herod died before a passover which must be that of April, 4 B.C.E. If Herod waited between one year and two years before ordering the slaughter of the infants then Jesus may well have been born around 4 B.C.E. before Herod died. Jesus was thus never a threat to Herod's throne and visit of the Magi was unnecessarily unfortunate for the murdered infants.

The slaughter of the infants brings to memory many ancient tales of great heroes who miraculously escaped deaths in their infancy. The Biblical account of the escape of the infant Moses from Pharaoh's order of killing of all Israel's infants because of the astronomer's prediction of Pharaoh's fall at the hands of someone born in that period is too familiar a pattern and an intriguing parallel! Strangely, although we have historical records including those of many minor events in the reign of Herod the Great, there is not even any hint in any such record, or even in any other New Testament document, about the alleged slaughter.

Herod(the Great) could have ordered the slaughter of children because Bethlehem was within his realm. Since the Roman Census(Taxing) had to be only in the territory under direct Roman rule, the whole story of the Census is not relevant. If the birth of Jesus took place several years after the death of Herod the Great(after his son Archelaus had been deposed and Judaea placed under direct Roman rule) then the story of the slaughter is obviously fabricated.

In the light of the above, "the credibility of the Matthew and Luke nativity narratives must be acknowledged to be doubtful" (Ian Wilson, Jesus: The Evidence). If we cannot trust the evangelists on their nativity narratives, can we place much reliance on their other narratives which involve doctrinal issues?



Palestine in Jesus' Time

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY LIFE

Upto now we have accepted without questioning that Jesus did indeed exist. There are, however, scholarly works which try to prove that Jesus in fact did not exist and was a fabrication of a secret cult, or of the mind of Paul or someone else. The historic evidence in favour of the existence of Jesus is scarce and fragmentary and as we have seen, with more to follow, whatever is available is quite often contradictory.

"Not even the Gospels give us the smallest crumb of information about what he looked like, whether he was tall or short, bearded or clean shaven, handsome or ugly.....with the exception of the forty days and nights in the wilderness (of which we are told virtually nothing), everything described in the Gospels could be compressed into three weeks, which leaves by far the greater part of Jesus' life unrecorded" (Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence*). As for his sayings and teachings these could come in no more than two columns of a daily newspaper!

Did Jesus' parents really travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem as narrated by Luke, or were they already living in Bethlehem as hinted by Matthew? Why is it that Mark, John, Paul as well as other writers of various books of New Testament do not mention the divine impregnation? There are no answers. We know so little about Jesus yet he is the central figure of a great religion which is based not necessarily on what he taught but on what he was according to the Christian mind.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

According to Matthew, as soon as the Magi, the Wise Men of the East, "were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod" (MT 2:13-15). Why take the holy family to Egypt? If they had to escape then why not to their own city of Nazareth? If Herod had no inkling as to who the holy child was then it did not matter which way the family went. Herod did not, after all decree that all children all over his kingdom should be exterminated. But if the family was not to be transported to far off Egypt then how could Matthew justify his Biblical quotation "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (MT 2:15)?

The Lucan account does not agree with that of Matthew, for "eight days later the time came to circumcise him, and he was given the name Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived (LK 2:21). This must have been in Bethlehem and for the moment presents no problem for the flight into Egypt. What is most baffling is that before going south-west into Egypt the family's north to Jerusalem, right into the lion's den! "And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord" (LK 2:22). One might say that this may have happened before Joseph was warned by the angel, though Matthew certainly does not give that impression. Thus the holy family was still in Judaea at least six weeks after birth.

One of the purposes to bring this first-born child to the Temple was "to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord. A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons" (LK 2:24). The usual sacrifice would have been a young lamb. Since Jesus' parents were

poor they could sacrifice only a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. It is, however, not clear if they sacrificed turtle-doves or pigeons. And if they were really so poor as not to be able to afford to sacrifice a lamb on the birth of their first born son then how come they had to travel to Bethlehem for "taxing"?

RETURN TO NAZARETH

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (LK 2:39). But Matthew tells us that they went to Egypt and "when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene" (MT 2:19-23). (Thus Matthew affirms that Joseph settled in Nazareth after return from Egypt and was not living there before Jesus' birth so that the Holy Family had no need of traveling to Bethlehem). We are not told of Joseph and Mary having learnt the Egyptian language and how were they able to sustain themselves there.

This scheme of things is a remarkable parallel to the flight of Moses out of Egypt into Midian from where he returned on Pharaoh's death. He too was told by God "Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life" (Ex 4:19). The Old Testament statement about coming out of Egypt is quoted from Hosea (11:1): "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt". This refers to Exodus and nothing to do with any other "son". But Matthew, in his enthusiasm to use this quotation fabricates a fantastic story of flight into Egypt which, as we shall see, has many obvious flaws.

When (and if) the Holy Family moved to Egypt Jesus must have been an infant, possibly only a couple of months old. But Luke tells us that after the first ritual visit to Jerusalem "his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of passover" (LK 2:4) and that in particular they were there when Jesus was only twelve years old (LK 2:42). Surely the Holy Family could not have been in Jerusalem as well as in Egypt at the same time. Or, did they frequently travel from Egypt to Jerusalem in spite of the danger?

Having taken Jesus out to Egypt the evangelist must bring him back. The obvious place would have been Bethlehem, the city of David, and of Joseph and Mary as Matthew himself had told us earlier. But that would not be right because in his older days Jesus was known to be from Nazareth as Luke had stated. So he brings in Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great who was now ruling Judaea. So off with Bethlehem which had already served the nativity story, and on to Nazareth. All the while he overlooks the fact that even in Galilee, where Nazareth was located, another son of Herod, Antipas, was now ruling in place of his father. In any case the holy child, the future "king of the Jews", was to have been a threat also to all the sons of Herod the Great who were now ruling various parts of their father's kingdom.

When was Jesus brought out of Egypt? Obviously "when Herod was dead" (MT 2:19). Also, "in those days came John, the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea" (MT 3:1). Herod died in 4 B.C.E. and correcting for the error in calculation of the calendar, Jesus may then have been a couple of years old. However, Jesus was about thirty years when John started his mission. In between the two dates Matthew seems to have lost any concept of history.

Nazareth as we know it now is some seventy miles north of Bethlehem, half way between the southern edge of the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea, about twenty miles from each. Josephas the Jewish historian of those time who was in command of Galilee for the Romans during the Jewish revolt prepared a list of all the towns and villages of the area. It does not include Nazareth. Perhaps it may have been a small hamlet not worthy of listing. Or it may have been destroyed during the Jewish Revolt.

Matthew's use of the word Nazarene also seems to be another of his enthusiastic attempts to quote a prophecy or two, rightly or wrongly. There is no such prophecy in the whole of Bible which actually refers to the coming of Messiah. He may have plucked it out of Judges(13:5): "...the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb...". It refers to the dedication of Samson. Nazarites were children who were dedicated to God and used to wear long hair. Jesus was never a Nazarite!

There is, however, a possibility that Matthew played with words and used a prophecy from Zechariah(6:12): "Behold the man whose name is The Branch". This was a word being used covertly for "the Messiah" based on Isaiah's prophecy: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of its roots"(Isa 11:1). During those times when the word Messiah indicated a revolutionary leader and therefore could lead to suspicion of treason The Branch(Netzer) was used to convey the meaning. In either case there is nothing in common with Nazarene and the one who comes from Nazareth.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

There is precious little that we know about Jesus from his birth to his Baptism on the banks of Jordan. Matthew jumps from arrival of the holy family in Nazareth to the arrival of John the Baptist in the area about Jordan. Luke, however, gives a small glimpse telling us of the annual visits of the family to Jerusalem.

During their very first visit, while in the Temple at Jerusalem, Jesus is recognised by a just and devout man Simeon who "said unto Mary, his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against"(LK 2:34). "And there was one Anna, a prophetess... gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem"(LK 2:36-38).

It is interesting that while Matthew plays hide and seek with the holy family, Luke brings them openly to Jerusalem thus totally negating Matthew's version. He even shows twelve years old Jesus discussing religious matters with the doctors of the religion in the Temple. This may be on the occasion of Jesus' BAR MITZVAH ceremony which signifies the religious "adulthood" of a Jewish child. "And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers"(LK 2:47). In the meantime his parents had left with the rest of the companions and, finding him missing, returned to the Temple. On Mary's telling him "behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business. And they understood not the sayings which he spoke unto them"(Lk 2:48-50). If these were ordinary parents with an ordinary child "they understood not" would not worry us. What is perplexing is that knowing Jesus to be a very extraordinary, divinely-conceived, child, they would not consider him any different from an ordinary child and did not understand what he meant by "Father". Unfortunately in the whole New Testament we find that to the misfortune of Jesus, no one seems to understand him. This phrase "they understood not" will be repeated several times. The root of this lies in the fact that in terms of Jewish hopes and conceptions Jesus turned out to be a total disappointment. The evangelists trying to avoid this image keep repeating that in actual fact no one really

understood him. No wonder he died friendless with just a few women at the site of his crucifixion!

There is nothing else that is told to us about Jesus' childhood or early adult life. Between the age of twelve and his presence before John the Baptist, which we shall discuss later, his (nominal) father Joseph must have died at a rather young age. Of Jesus' profession we learn only indirectly: "Is not this the Carpenter, the son of Mary?" (MK 6:3). Later on, out of veneration or the need to assign a human father at least nominally, Matthew reports the same remark as: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?" (MT 13:55). Luke limits himself to saying: "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Lk 4:22). He could not make himself give an earthly profession to his deity or even to his earthly father!

Having been orphaned the burden of the household must have fallen on him. In the tradition of the times he must have learnt his profession directly from his father. The life of a carpenter in a small hamlet must have been that of austerity. This is also indicated by the fact that his parents could not afford a male lamb for sacrifice at his birth and instead offered two doves/pigeons. Even though the Roman Catholic Church considers Mary a "Perpetual Virgin" apparently Mary did have a number of children after Jesus, her firstborn. Indirect support to this is given by Matthew's "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (MT 1:25). Jesus seems to have had at least four brothers namely James, Joseph, Judas and Simon and some sisters (MK 6:3, MT 13:55, LK 8:21). Looking after a large family at a rather young age must have kept him busy. No wonder he was not yet married at the age of thirty or so when he presented himself for baptism. [Also see Chapter XIII for a variant theme].

THE FORE-RUNNER

Under Paul's tutoring the newly converted "Christians" had a sort of compulsion to dig out Old Testament verses which could be used even by some remote similarity of words to prove that Jesus was the Messiah and that whatever was being said about him had already been foretold. Every one of the Gospel writers has this trait. We have already seen how Matthew quoted certain so-called "prophecies" to fit some events or rather fitted or fabricated events to fit such "prophecies". Mark begins his Gospel of Jesus Christ by quoting two such prophecies:

- 1:2 Behold I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- 1:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

According to KJV these prophecies had been as "written in the prophets". However, modern translators faced with discerning readers had to say that what KJV says "Prophets" was actually written as "I saith" by Malachi (NWT, NIV, GNB, NEB and even RBV which ordinarily follows KJV in modern English). It seems the KJV translators of 1611 C.E. were aware that the prophecy at MK(1:2) was in fact by Malachi which was not relevant to the present situation. In order to remove the discrepancy they simply substituted "prophets" and thus corrected the "inspired" text. The actual prophecy reads as follows: KJV-Mal(3:1): "I shall send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me". A simple comparison of the two texts from the same translations shows how cleverly the evangelist adapts the "prophecy" to the situation of his choice.

Matthew(3:3) quotes only the "prophecy" by prophet E-sai-as or Isaiah(40:3). Luke also quotes the same prophecy but he quotes three verses(40:3-5) rather than one. This particular "prophecy" is in the beginning of Chapter 40 of the book of Isaiah which is the beginning of what is generally known as Second Isaiah. the original prophet had indeed died

before this was written. Someone may have added the later part of the chapter during the period of the exile. the Second Isaiah is convinced that the Exile is soon to be broken and he sees the one whose worldly hand will be used by God to break that exile. Mark just borrowed the words, turned them around and made up the prophecy to fit the occasion. Matthew and Luke followed suit. By the time John was writing there was a direct competition between the followers of John the Baptist and the "Christians" and, therefore, John the evangelist, did not want to give too much importance to the Baptist and would rather play him down. We see this tendency in all the Gospels and especially with John.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Mark brings in John quickly at the very beginning of his Gospel: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance... and John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins, and he did eat locusts and wild honey"(MK 1:4-6). John's description seems to fit the description of Elijah who was supposed to return to earth before the dreadful Day of the Lord:

11 Kg(1:8) "He(ELIJAH) was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins".

1 Kg(17:6) "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning"

Mal(4:5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord".

Matthew later quotes Jesus as confirming that "Elias[Elijah] is come already, and they knew him not...then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist"(MT 17:12,13). Whether Jesus really meant that or not we shall discuss later. Matthew's description of John is similar to that given by Mark. People "flocked to him from Jerusalem, all over Judaea and all the region of the Jordan valley and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing sin"(MT 3:5,6). John's message was "Repent ye' for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"(MT 3:2).

According to Luke all were wondering "whether he were the Christ, or not"(LK 3:15). Here then was a direct challenge which the various Gospel-writers meet in their own way. Mark makes him say: "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latch of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost"(MK 1:7,8). Matthew adds:"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"(MT 3:12). Luke makes a small amendment: "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire"(LK 3:16).

John the Gospel writer is a master of oratory and elaborate details. He does not want to give much importance to the Baptist but would rather use his mission for furthering his own doctrines: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to be witness of that light"(JN 1:6-9)." John bore witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spoke. He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"(JN 1:15-18). We can be pretty certain that John never would have said that. he was a Jew, firmly entrenched in Monotheism, assigning no partners with God. If Jews would be objecting to the term Son of God, as Christians claim that they did, then they would certainly have objected to John the Baptist saying that. John's own followers never accepted that term. John the evangelist was shamelessly fabricating even when there was a large following of the Baptist still around. But

he was writing when John the Baptist had already left this world and no one could contradict him whatever he was writing. In those days of no current records his word was as good as any one else's.

John makes sure that the Baptist does not only (matter-of-factly) deny being the Christ but rather humbly confesses that he is not (JN 1:20): "And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias [ELIJAH]? and he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. then said they unto him who art thou?...He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord...And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth among you, whom ye know not: He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Beth-aba-ra beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing" (JN 1:21-28). It is astonishing that having found his superior John does not follow Jesus as his disciple but rather keeps baptizing independently indeed he baptized Jesus himself for remission of sins!

Whatever really transpired, we are given to understand that the Jews were actually expecting three persons: The Christ [MESSIAH], ELIAS/ELIJAH, and a ("That") Prophet. The Prophet they were seeking is the one which Moses had promised them: "A prophet from your own midst, from your brethren, like me, is what Jehovah your God will raise up for you, to him you should listen" (Deut 18:15). All through the ages the Jews did not accept anyone to be "that prophet": not Joshua, nor David, nor Solomon, nor Isaiah, not even Elijah. this will be special, "LIKE MOSES". He will be different, someone more than a Christ or even the great prophet Elijah. He will be "Like Moses".

We now face total confusion: John says he is NOT the expected Elijah nor Christ, nor that prophet, but Jesus insists, or so say the Gospel-writers, that John "is Elias" (MT 11:14), "Elias is indeed come" (MK 9:13, MT 12:12). Yet Elias (ELIJAH) is made to appear later alongwith Moses himself in what is known as "transfiguration" (LK 9:30). As for himself, Jesus is made to play hide and seek sometimes claiming or not denying to be the Messiah but mostly "he straightly charged them and commanded them to tell no man that thing" (Lk 9:21). We never get an unambiguous statement that he is the promised Messiah, at least not the kind that the Jews were longing for. In any case there is no claimant to being "that Prophet" [See Appendix III]. All this is most discomfoting.

BAPTISM OF JESUS

"Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan" (MK 1:9) Now if baptism is supposed to be for confession and repentance of sins so why should Jesus, the sinless one, Son of god, a deity, need daptism from a mere prophet? the evangelist explains that "John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. The he suffered him" (MT 3:14,15).

According to John it is soon after the confession of the Baptist that he was not the Messiah, "the next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Isreal. Therefore, am I come baptizing with water" (JN 1:29-31). John the Gospel-writer keeps on emphasizing greatness of Jesus as compared to John the Baptist but in all this never acknowledges even the fact of Jesus' baptism!

The manner of the baptism of John was to submerge the person completely under water as if the person had died to the world along with the sinful nature and emerging out starts a new life purified from sin. As for Jesus "straight way coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (MK 1:10,11; MT 3:16,17; Lk 3:21,22).

This story is too good to be left out. So John, who ignores the baptism, resorts to some other method to reap the fall-out: "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him and I knew him not but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples: And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" (JN1:32-36).

There is something odd in John calling Jesus the Son of God as we have already stated earlier. But why is that even after so recognizing Jesus he sends his disciples with a query from the prison where Herod had put him: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (MT 11:3). If John really recognized Jesus, who was his cousin anyway, and called him Son of God, then this query is most baffling. Rather, having found the promised Messiah John should have requested Jesus to baptise him with the Holy Spirit and from then onward followed the Master. Perhaps he did not do so as he himself had been filled with the Holy Spirit from his very birth (Lk 1:15).

Jesus' baptism keeps the evangelists busy lest someone may infer that John was somehow superior or Jesus had any need to repent. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen one greater than John the Baptist: not withstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (MT 11:11). Cleverly put it does not directly belittle John, rather it makes him the superior-most among those born of women, but then anyone who will follow Jesus is stated to be better than John. How cunning! Yet in the process, the Gospel-writer overlooks that this sentence coming out of Jesus' own mouth makes Abraham, Moses, Jacob, David, all other prophets and everyone else who is born of a woman (even Jesus?), inferior to John! Obviously the Gospel-writer overstretched himself. Perhaps he was not appropriately inspired at least at this stage of his writing.

"And straightway coming up out of the water he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved, in whom I am well pleased" (MK 1:10-11). "And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (MT 3:16-17). "The heavens opened up and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Lk 3:22). There are obvious speculations whether all the multitude saw the heavens opening up or if the spectacle was seen only by Jesus and/or John the Baptist and whether the Heavenly Voice announced publicly "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew) or it was a private confirmation "thou art my beloved Son" (Mark and Luke). Anyway why should God the Son need any confirmation from Heavenly Voice ("Father" speaking!) and Holy Spirit coming in the Shape of a dove. If God cannot be seen (Ex 33:20; Jdg 13:22; 1 Tim 6:16) then why were the Son and the Spirit visible when both of them are "God"? If the "Son" was an incarnation of "God" then was the Holy Spirit also incarnated into a dove? — What happened to that Dove?

Baptism of water was a familiar manner of initiation in many (pagan) cultures. It represented purification of soul by washing away of sins. When a person is immersed in water it symbolises the death of his corrupt, sinful, soul. He is reborn as he emerges out of water. The mind acquires truth; for the mind at first is ignorant and full of illusions and evil while desire rules the soul; and it is truth (water) that purifies.

The Holy Spirit descending as a dove is also of mythical nature: "All the powers of God are winged, being always eager and striving for the higher path which leads to the Father" (Philo, Works, Vol. IV). In Hindu mythology the sun is called the bird of Savitri. Bird is also a Hebrew term for angel.

John the Baptist is also quoted to have said of Jesus: "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"(MT 3:11). Later when Jesus' disciples were gathered together at the time of Pentecost, "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Ghost"(Acts 2:3-4). Fire burns up the chaff or error. In Hindu mythology Agni, the fire-god "is the light, the burner of evil, he burns away the evil of this sacrificer; and the latter becomes a light of prosperity and glory in this, and a light of bliss in yonder world: (Satapatha Brahmana, XI, 2,3,6).

It is perplexing that with all this talk of recognition by John the Baptist he still remained uncertain who Jesus really was. "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them"(MT 11:2-5).

It is typical of Matthew to play with the number two. So he makes John send two disciples to report on Jesus whose reply is once again non-committal. He refers to his works and asks John to make his own judgment. In fact Matthew seems to have found yet another opportunity to quote from Isaiah: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing"(35:5-6). Matthew himself added the raising of the dead even though by this time Jesus had not yet raised any of the dead.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Soon after Jesus was baptized "immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan: and was with the wild beasts; and angels ministered unto him"(MK 1:12,13). "When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred"(MT 4:2). "Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended he afterwards hungred"(LK 4:2).

Mark does not give us any details of the temptation but both Matthew and Luke, the later writers, give certain details: "And when the tempter came to him, he said. If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto him. If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning these and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him. It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and

sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world. And the glory of them: And saith unto him all this power will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him. Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him and behold angels came and ministered unto him" (MT 4:3-11). Luke repeats these temptations except that he lists Jesus being taken to the pinnacle of the temple as third temptation rather than the second as in Matthew's Gospel (LK 4:3-13).

John is the smart one. By his time Christianity had established Jesus' Sonship a little more forcefully. He does not show Jesus, "God the Son", being tempted by the devil. The devil should know better than tempting God himself. How could he offer kingdoms of the earth to someone whose were the kingdoms of the heaven and earth? So John completely ignores the temptation episode as he did with Jesus' baptism.

Going into wilderness for contemplation was a normal procedure with holy men of the past. Elijah had done it, John the Baptist had done it, the Essenes/Qumran community were doing so. In India Gautam Buddha had done it. Paul would later do it after his "vision". It seems quite reasonable that after having been baptized and, as we may call it, "called to the ministry", Jesus goes into seclusion in the wilderness to meditate, to contemplate, and to decide on his own mission: what type of preacher was he to be, what should he try to accomplish, was he to be the Messiah of war, or a man of peace, or a preacher of repentance.

"The story of Jesus' baptism, the coming of the dove, the heavenly voice and his period of seclusion is reminiscent of certain Greek initiation ceremonies wherein the initiate after lying naked in a sheet and repeating a prescribed chant, is told to expect to see a sea-hawk flying down as a sign that union with the deity had been achieved. Such initiations were commonly followed by a period of self-enforced privation" (Ian Wilson, Op.Cit). The number forty is also somehow an important one in biblical narrations: forty years of Moses, forty years of wandering of Israel in the wilderness, forty days for ritual cleansing of women after birth, forty days of Jesus in the wilderness!

Temptation of the initiate has been common among the primitives and pagan religions while teaching self-constraint. "Aspirants desiring the knowledge of the Upanishads were subjected to severe ordeals by their preceptors. The Katha Upanishad describes the case of Nadriketa, who was tested in various ways by Yama, the god of death, to ascertain his fitness for the knowledge of Brahman. He was offered horses, elephants, and cattle; children and grandchildren; rulership of the earth and many years of life, heavenly damsels and their magic; and numerous other desirable things which do not fall to the lot of an ordinary mortal. But he spurned them all, understanding their transitory nature, and persisted in his prayers for the Knowledge of self. Pratardana was tested by Indra, Janasruti Pautrayana by Raikva, Arni by Pravahana, Janaka by Yajnavalkya and Brihadratha by Sakayanya (Swami Nikhilananda: The Upanishads, Harper & Row, New York, 1964, pp. 24).

START OF THE MISSION

According to the Gospel of John the calendar for Jesus' missionary work is simple and straightforward. When the delegation of the Pharisees comes to question John the Baptist for the reason of his baptizing, he hints of someone "standing among you" who was to be the one "coming after me is preferred before me" (JN 1:27). Jesus was perhaps standing there among the crowd just surveying. The day after that John sees Jesus and calls him the Lamb of God (JN 1:29) and later the Son of God (JN 1:34). On the second day John was standing with his two disciples and sees Jesus walking past and says "Behold the Lamb of God" (JN 1:36). "The two disciples

heard him speak, and they followed Jesus"(JN 1:37). and even spent the night where Jesus was residing.

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his brother Simon, and saith unto him. We have found the Mes-si-as, which is being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, son of Jonah: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone"(JN 1:40-43).

"The day following Jesus would go forth in Galilee and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Beth-Sai-da, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith to him, Come and see"(JN 1:43-46). Nathanael talks to Jesus and says "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"(JN 1:49).

"The third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee...the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it"(JN 2:1-5). This is where Jesus performs his first miracle turning water in six pots of stone into wine. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed in him"(JN 2:11).

According to John, Jesus then moves on to Capernaum and then to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. "And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple"(JN 2:14-16). Thus John's Jesus starts his mission right from the beginning with a challenge to the authorities of the Temple. With other Gospel writers this happened towards the end of his mission.

"And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven... He must increase but I must decrease"(JN 3:26-30).

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples). He left Judaea and departed again into Galilee"(JN 4:1-3). The fact was that Jesus was not being successful in the beginning and this is the reason he left Judaea to go back to Galilee. The matter within the parenthesis in the above quotation is apparently an unauthorised interpolation by a later scribe.

THE OTHER VERSIONS

Mark, Matthew and Luke all report that Jesus' mission started after he had spent forty days in the wilderness and not immediately after his baptism. Mark and Matthew report that Jesus left for Galilee only after John was put in prison (MK 1:14; MT 4:12). This does not agree with John's version of Jesus preaching concurrently with the Baptist as quoted above.

"Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the Sea: for they were fishers"(MK 1:16; MT 4:18). This is more likely as the two were from Beth-Saida on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. John had them meet in Beth-Abara some thirty miles down stream to Jordan. Which looks odd because John had been baptizing "on the other side of Jordan" somewhere near Beth-Abara. True to his manner he

takes Jesus to Capernaum before reaching Beth-Saida to use a prophecy or two, cross the river Jordan, go to Nazareth, then to Capernaum, cross Leontes river to go to Beth-saida, then cross back and go to Nazareth where according to Luke he declared his mission. Mark seems more methodical and takes him first to Beth- Saida, then to Capernaum, then keeps him in the region probably also to Beth-Saida and then back to Capernaum.

Luke's version throws somewhat better light. He tells us that at the time of his baptism "Jesus himself began to be thirty years of age being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli. Son of David... Son of Abraham... Son of Adam, which was the Son of God"(Lk 3:23-38). Jesus does some baptizing in Galilee "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the Book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord...And he closed the book and began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"(LK 4:16-21). The quotation he read was from Isaiah(61:1,2).

The translators of KJV used "opened/closed the book" for better understanding of their readers. The actual object was the scroll as were used on those times. The sudden announcement of the fulfillment of the prophecy must have astonished his local audience who, according to the Gospel account, had known him only as a carpenter, son of Joseph the carpenter. Not knowing him as anyone significant or much learned, his audacity would have shocked his audience. Naturally, they were infuriated and pushed him out of the city and would have thrown him off the hill had he not escaped.

We are told that Jesus' Message was: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel"(MK 1:15, MT 4:17) which was the same as being taught by John the Baptist. What infuriated the people was the claim of being "anointed" made by this man from the backwoods of Nazareth. How could they believe that this mere carpenter was the Chosen One, a prophet of the Holy One, who was to sit on the throne of the great King David!

It is significant to note that Luke, who narrates this episode does not indicate any miracle that Jesus may have performed upto now. He does report "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician heal thyself, whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country"(Lk 4:23,24). This small quotation is quite intriguing. It is quite likely that these words may in fact have been uttered by his audience in their wrath: you are mad, heal thyself first. This must have happened quite early in his ministry as stated by Luke rather than later as Mark(6:2-6) and Matthew(13:57, 58) tell us.

The story that Mark and Matthew narrate is also couched in polite words: "the large congregation that heard him were amazed and said, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary... And they were offended at him:... And he could there do no mighty works, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief"(MK 6:2-6). All this is confusing because how could they be offended after being amazed of his wisdom and works! It seems that the Spirit of God that was with him in the synagogue(Lk 4:18) had deserted the Son when faced with people's wrath.

THE GALILEAN SOJOURN

Jesus' Galilean origin and his initial mission in that region are significant to his character. Galilean conversion to Judaism had not been very old. Even at the time of Jesus there were quite a large number of pagans living in the region. The Judaeans considered the Galileans religiously ignorant and rightly so. Galilee hates the Law, they would say. It is because of this prejudice that Jewish leaders taunted Nicodemus, who tried to defend Jesus, "Art thou also of Galilee? search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (JN 7:52).

Nevertheless inspite of their reputed religious un-soundness the Jews of Galilee retained all the ardour characteristic of converts. The region was abound with holy men And sages who, despite their casual attitude to the Law or the ritual, confidently claimed an intimate, informal, direct familiarity with God. there were plenty of exorcists, healers and miracle workers. Some see the reflection of these Hasidim, or pious people, in what Jesus said and did, in his calling God as his Father, in his miracles, exorcism and healing. A small number of Hasidim, called the Essenes, lived in isolated communities, practicing asceticism, as monks. Inspite of Jesus' manifest extraordinary performances many remained skeptical considering him perhaps another of those Essenes.

In the Galilee region Jesus made Capernaum as his base. Even so, he avoided the large cities and preferred open spaces and lake shores. He would often go to lonely places to pray (Lk 5:16). Gospels tell us that crowds would gather to listen to him. Once while preaching at the lake shore the crowd became so large that he had to move to a boat (Mk 4:1).

Once he was teaching in a house when "some men came carrying a paralysed man on a bed, and they tried to take him into the house and put him in front of Jesus. Because of the crowd, however, they could find no way to take him in. So they carried him upon the roof, made an opening in the tiles, and let him down on his bed" (Lk 5:18,19). He did many miracles of healing the sick and driving out unclean spirits.

He appointed twelve men to be his companions to assist him in his work. "Jesus called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. Then he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal sick after saying to them: Take nothing with you for the journey: no stick, no beggar's bag, no food, no money, not even an extra shirt. Wherever you are welcomed stay in the same house until you leave; wherever people don't welcome you, leave that town and shake the dust off your feet as a warning to them. However, he specifically instructed them; "go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of Samaritans enter ye not" (MT 10:5-6). The disciples left and travelled through all the villages, preaching the Good News and healing people everywhere" (Lk 9:1-6). At one time he is said to have sent as many as seventy two disciples. "They came back in great joy. Lord, they said, even the demons obeyed us when we gave them a command in your name" (Lk 9:17) All these missions were preached only to the Jews.

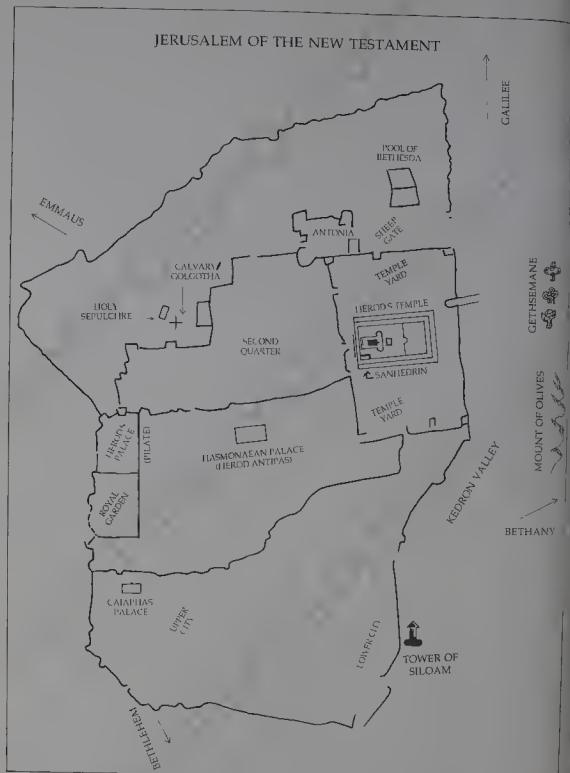
But, inspite of the allegedly large crowds reported by the Gospels, it seems that Jesus' mission did not go well. "Woe, unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee Beth-Saida! for if these mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they would have a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which Art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell" (Lk 10:13-15).

TO JUDEA AND BACK

There are no authentic records of Jesus' journeys through Galilee or to other places and their proper sequence. What we get from the Gospels are haphazard fragments mentioning a

name here or a place there. From these we gather that Jesus paid visit to Tyre, Sidon and Caesarea Philippi regions towards the later part of his mission(MT 15:21),16:13;MK 8:27,10:1) and then came into Judaea across Jordan(MT 19:1). Wherever he went the crowds would gather. Yet the Gospels also report that "In spite of the many signs which Jesus had performed in their presence they would not believe him"(JN 12:37). Even so "among those in authority a number believed in him, but would not acknowledge him on account of the Pharisees, for fear of being banned from the Synagogue"(JN 12:42,43). this does not seem correct; if Jesus himself was not banned from the Synagogues but had been teaching there openly, then how could those who believed in him be banned? In order not to accept failure, John's Gospel records: "Crowds came to him. they said, John gave us no miraculous sign, but all that he said about this man was true"(JN 10:40,41).

"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry [JUDAEA], because Jews sought to kill him. And Jesus feeling the danger started telling his disciples of the things to come: "The Son of Man is now to be given up into the power of men, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again. But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask"(Mk 9:30-32). And he decided to go to Jerusalem to meet the danger head long. It is intriguing why would the Jews seek to kill Jesus if he was only preaching and doing a few healings.



THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them...and he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen to him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again"(MK 10 :32-34,KJV). According to NEB the last sentence reads thus: "and three days afterwards, he will rise again"; RBV: "and after three days He will rise again";NIV:"Three days later he will rise";NWT: "three days later he will rise".

According to the Gospel of Matthew(20:19) KJV:"and the third day he shall rise again"; NEB:"on the third day"; RBV:"on the third day"; NIV:"on the third day";NWT:"the third day". Thus modern translators all agree that while Mark says "three days later", Matthew writes "on the third day". and so does Luke (18:34). This would mean a difference of one day. Apparently KJV had mistranslated or corrected what seemed to be a clear case of wrong counting in the original manuscript of Mark.

On the road to Jerusalem Jesus declared: "...it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you. Ye shall not see me, until the time comes when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"(LK 13:33-35).

Jesus' disciples listened to Jesus talk like this, but simpletons as they are portrayed, "they understood none of these things;and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken"(LK 18:34). This is rather unflattering especially for the "Twelve" who will later be his Apostles to carry on his work after his death. If they understood not what Jesus was telling them then how could they spread his message? The fact is that they eventually came in conflict with Paul and it was necessary to project them as if they had not understood Jesus' real message and mission.

"And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany,at the Mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you and as soon as ye have entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him;and straight way he will send him hither. And they went their way and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met and loose they him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, what do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought their colt to Jesus, and cast the garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed cried, saying, Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of

the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple, and when he looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out from Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow...they came to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple"(MK 11:1-16).

According to Mark Jesus entered Jerusalem and went straight to the temple and surveyed the scene. He came back the next day and upset the tables of the moneychangers, etc. However, Matthew reports that he upset the tables the very first day that he entered Jerusalem. "And when he was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said: This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and seats of them that sold doves"(MT 21:10-12).

This is not the only difference in the versions of the Gospels regarding Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. What Mark called "colt", Matthew reports as "ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her...and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass"(MT 21:2,5). Matthew's version of "an ass tied, and a colt with her" is rather intriguing for he then makes Jesus ride on "An ass and a colt the foal of an ass". How could Jesus ride two animals at once? Or, did he? This seems to be anchored in mythological nature of an "ass" and a "colt".

The difference between that which was within and without is well illustrated by a similitude (in the Zohar) which says that those who interpret Scripture according to the literal sense set the Sacred King and his Bride upon an ass, The ass tied and a colt" signify respectively an old doctrine and a new truth to which it has given birth. Upon these the Christ-Soul progresses to the higher state (the heavenly Jerusalem), as he comes not to destroy but to fulfil, and presents many an old fable as a new and enlightening fact. The colt represents the new truth whereon no mind as yet can sit as master" (G. S. Gaskell: Dictionary of Scripture and Myth, pp. 76-77). Matthew seems to have succumbed to a myth!

No where else in the whole of New Testament is Jesus known to have used anything to ride. Obviously all this had been forethought and pre-arranged. Why did he make such a special departure from his normal practice of going around on foot? Why did he make this show of superiority over others who were accompanying him on foot? The possibility of divine knowledge apart, did he or someone on his behalf, make elaborate arrangements? Matthew suggests that "all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass"(MT 21:4,5). Did Jesus really act out all this to deliberately force the prophecy to be fulfilled?

John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, is fond of elaborate details and unusual events. By the time of his writing Christianity had become a distinctly separate religion and broken its links with Judaism. It had by now become the religion of the Gentiles and doctrinal debates were going on between different congregations. According to John, Jesus made a number of separate journeys to Jerusalem rather than just one as reported by Mark, Matthew and Luke, the writers of what are known as "synoptic" Gospels. Whereas the Synoptic Gospels record that the journey was undertaken at the end of Jesus' earthly sojourn, John reports that the first of his

reported journeys took place in the early days after the first miracle recorded by John where Jesus turns water into wine (JN Ch. 2).

The commotion at the temple obviously annoyed the Jewish leaders and they demanded: "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things.? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (JN 2:18-20). At his trial by the High Priest Jesus will be accused of threatening to destroy the temple. So John adds "But he spoke of the temple of his body" (JN 2:21). It is here also that John introduces Nicodemus, a man of the pharisees, a ruler of the Jews (JN 3:1) who will play an important role in the burial of Jesus. Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night secretly and professes his faith in him as a teacher come from God. It is intriguing what was it about Jesus and his teachings that Nicodemus had to come to him secretly! "After this, Jesus went into Judaea with his disciples, stayed there with them and baptized" (JN 3:22).

"A report now reached the pharisees: 'Jesus is winning and baptizing more disciples than John: although in fact, it was only the disciples who were baptizing and not Jesus himself'" (JN 4:1- 2). This is in conflict with JN(3:22) reported above where it is clearly stated that Jesus' "stayed there with them and baptized". It seems JN(4:1-2) was so worded for two purposes: orfe, to assert that Jesus was making more disciple than John and so show him to be superior to John the Baptist whose disciples were still in large number as "John" was writing his Gospel and, secondly, to find an excuse because in fact Jesus had not been a manifest success in Judaea. This last fact is indicated by JN(4:3): "When Jesus learnt this, he left Judaea and set out once more for Galilee". If Jesus was in fact winning disciples then he did not have to leave Judaea! Unfortunately Jesus' mission to Galilee was also not a success for Jesus himself testified that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country" (JN4:44).

As we have stated earlier, John was writing his Gospel at a time when Christianity had become more of a religion of the Gentiles, so John reports Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman and gives the impression that he at least tried to convey his message even to the Samaritans whom the Jews considered as unclean. On the contrary, Matthew in his Gospel had recorded: "These twelve Jesus set forth and commanded them, saying, Go not unto the way of the Gentiles and into the city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MT 10:5-6). Later when a Gentile woman sought Jesus' help he answered and said "It is not meet to take children's bread and cast it to the dogs" (MT 15:22-26).

"And he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here. And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (MK 13:1-2). Jesus then speaks of coming wars, famines and pestilences. Similar mentions are made by Matthew(24) and Luke(21). What is interesting to note is that when these Gospels were being written these "prophecised" events were already a matter of the past! For once Jesus was not entirely correct in his prophecy. Although Temple was destroyed by the Romans, there are many stones still standing on top of each. We have the whole Wailing Wall still standing even in our own times.

John now mentions another journey to Jerusalem (JN 5) when he cites the story of a cripple lying by the side of the sheep-pool known as Bethesda where an angel would come and

disturb the water and whoever is the first to plunge in after the disturbance is recovered from whatever had afflicted him. Since this would be a miracle by itself, nothing to do with Jesus, many versions of the Bible omit it. KJV includes this as verse 4. So do RBV and TLB but NWT, NEB and NIV omit it ascribing it to "some less important manuscripts". The conflict with the Jews deepens and they accuse him of breaking the sabbath and claiming equality with God whom he called his own Father (JN 5:18). Jesus makes the claim: "the Father does not judge anyone, but has given full jurisdiction to the Son" (JN 5:22). Yet on another occasion Jesus is quoted as saying: "I have not come to judge the world" (JN 12:47). After this visit Jesus is said to withdraw to the farther shore of the sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). "He wished to avoid Judaea because the Jews were looking for a chance to kill him" (JN. 7:2). "Jesus no longer went about publicly in Jewry [Judaea]" (JN 11:54). All this is intriguing — what did he do to incur their wrath?

"As the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was close at hand, his brothers wanted him to accompany them to Jerusalem but Jesus said to them, Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going up to the festival because my time is not yet come" (JN 7:8-9). But as soon as they had left "then went he also, not openly but as it were in secret" (JN 7:10). It is made to look as if he was himself afraid of the Jews. Yet he went and started teaching immediately on arrival in Jerusalem. It is on this trip that he is brought a woman caught in adultery and they asked him. Now Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned, but what sayest thou? Jesus would not answer, but, when pressed, told them 'That one of you who is faultless shall throw the first stone'. All of them went away and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing. Jesus again sat up and said to the woman: Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said: No man, Lord. Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee go and sin no more"

The above story is included in KJV at JN 8:1-11, but raises ticklish questions: Having given the verdict why did he, the faultless, the sinless, not stone the woman? Did Jesus, by doing so condone the sin? Did he imply that since "all have sinned" (Rom 3:24) the society cannot punish the sinners/criminals? To avoid answering this question some of the modern versions delete this passage on the ground that "the earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have this passage" (NIV, NWT, RSV). Yet RBV, TJB and TLB consider it authentic. Wherever it is included it appears at various places in the text, such as JN(7:53-8:11), after LK(21:38) or after JN(7:36 or 21:24). How do we decide which versions/manuscripts are correct and which are not? Such doubts emerge throughout the Bible and today, even after all the researches, not one version of this "most widely translated and read" book is such which could be agreed upon as "The Correct Version" by all the Christians.

Jesus is then made to come to Jerusalem again in the winter for the Festival of Dedication. "Jesus withdrew again across the Jordan, to the place where John had been baptizing earlier. There he stayed while crowds came to him. They said: John gave us no miraculous sign, but all that he said about this man was true" (JN 10:40-42). Again John tries to belittle John the Baptist but draws strength from his testimony about Jesus.

Now for the final journey to Jerusalem John brings "great body of pilgrims who had come to the festival with palm branches, shouting 'Hosanna ! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord: God bless the king of Israel! Jesus found a donkey and mounted it, in accordance with the text of scripture: 'Fear no more, daughter of Zion: see your king is coming, mounted on an ass's colt'" (JN 12:12-15). There were delegations and speeches but "Inspite of

many signs which Jesus had performed in their presence they would not believe in him"(JN 12:37). True to his habit John declares that all this had been said in earlier prophecies of Isaiah(JN 11,12:38-41).

John plays hide and seek with Jesus. He brings him to Jerusalem then whisks him away only to be brought back, makes him preach openly and once again he withdraws: "After these words Jesus went away from them in hiding"(JN 12:36).

THE PASSOVER FEAST

Now the Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread was only two days off. "Jesus was at Bethany [outside Jerusalem], in the house of Simon, the leper. As he sat, a woman came in carrying small bottle of very costly perfume, pure oil of nard. She broke it open and poured the oil over his head. Some of the present said to one another angrily, 'Why this waste? The perfume might have been sold for thirty pounds and the money given to the poor' (MK 14:3-5). According to Mark "Some of the present" were angry. Matthew says "The disciples were indignant". The event is not of much importance but it is here that it is mentioned that Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, decided to betray his Master.

Luke does not mention this episode of anointing at this point. According to him this had happened long time ago in Galilee: "One of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him; he went to the Pharisee's house and took his place at table. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment"(LK 7:36-38). No disciples are mentioned to protest on this waste. How this woman of bad reputation could enter the house of a pious Pharisee is something questionable.

John has, however, a somewhat different story to tell. According to him this happened six days before the Passover, not two days as in the two of the synoptic Gospels. "A supper was given in his honour, at which Martha served and Lazarus sat among the guests with Jesus. Then their sister Mary brought a pound of very costly perfume, pure oil of nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair till the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Judas Iscariot, a disciple of his, the one who was to betray him, said, 'why was this perfume not sold for thirty pounds and given to the poor?' He said this not out of any care for the poor, but because he was a thief: he used to pilfer the money put into the common purse, which was in his charge. Leave her alone, said Jesus. Let her keep it till the day when she prepares for my burial"(JN 12:2-7).

Now John not only adds four extra days but he also adds much colour to the story. Instead of Jesus just happening to be in Bethany, a proper supper with many guests is arranged for him. Lazarus is there as a physical proof of one who had been resurrected from the dead. He is there with Martha, his sister, who is serving the guests. The woman who brought the perfume is now known by the name of Mary who was manifestly not the woman of ill reputation mentioned by Luke doing her act in Galilee. She brings in not a 'small bottle' as stated by Mark and Matthew but apparently a large one containing a "pound" of very costly perfume. She does not put the oil on Jesus' hair as according to the two synoptic Gospels but she is now anointing

his feet and wipes them with her hair. Her 'pound' of oil should have come handy on the day when she prepares for Jesus' burial as Jesus suggests but we never hear of it again.

As for those who were angry on this waste, according to John it was only Judas Iscariot, the holder of the common purse. Interestingly, if Judas was indeed a thief as John tells us then he must have made a bad bargain with the "Jews" for thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus rather than keep him alive and keep the purse as well.

On the day of the Unleavened Bread the disciples arrange a meeting place according to the instructions Jesus gave them. "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" (MK 14:13-15; LK 22:10-13). Normally the Jewish women go about to bring water; the man carrying the jar must be an odd sight. Was this a secret password? It seems Jesus may have made elaborate arrangements to do this. Every evening he had gone out of Jerusalem, possibly to avoid being arrested in the darkness of the night. Now in order to remain in the city after dark he must have made such secret arrangements. Matthew, however, does not mention the man with a jar. Jesus' instructions are more specific: "Go into the city to such a man" (MT 26:18).

'As they sat at supper Jesus said: I tell you this: One of you will betray me, one who is eating with me. It is one of the Twelve who is dipping into bowl with me' (MK 14:18-20). Interestingly, as the time passed, each Gospel writer adds something to the story.

According to Mark, the Twelve, one by one, said to him 'Not I, surely' but according to Matthew it is Judas who asks: Rabbi, can you mean me? Jesus replied: The words are yours (MT 26:25). To Luke, who writes for the Gentiles, this is superfluous for the stage is already set, the destiny is already destined. Jesus starts his discourse by saying, 'How I have longed to eat this passover with you before my death' (LK 22:15). John would not have Jesus start such an important meeting so unceremoniously. As soon as everyone was seated "Jesus...rose from the table, laid aside his garments and taking a towel tied around him. Then he poured water in a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with towel" (JN 13:4-5). Peter hesitates, then, realising the honour, asks Jesus to wash his hands and head as well. Jesus reassures him: "You are clean, though not everyone of you". He added the words 'not everyone of you' because he knew who was going to betray him" (JN 13:10-11). John keeps reassuring us so that we may not get the idea that the Son of God did not know the unknown. He keeps hammering that Jesus knew all along what will happen to him and who will betray him. Earlier he had written: "yet one of you is a devil, He meant Judas" (JN 6:70-71). While the three synoptic Gospels suffice to say "One of the Twelve", John must elaborate: "One of them, the disciple he loved, was reclining close besides Jesus. So Simon Peter nodded to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means'. That disciple leaned back close to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, who is it? Jesus replied, 'It is the man to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the bowl' (JN 13:26). There must have been hush in the room with an air of expectancy, everyone waiting to see to whom the bread will be given. 'Then, after dipping it in the bowl, he took it out and gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot' (JN 13:26). It is sad for Jesus that he had to contend with disciples, later to become his Apostles and torch-bearers, that 'Not one at table understood what he meant by it' and when Jesus told Judas: Do quickly what you have to do, some supposed that as Judas was in charge of the common purse, Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to make some gift to the poor (JN 13:29).

According to John, Satan entered Judah as soon as he received the bread (JN 13:30). Here he contradicts even himself as he had earlier stated that before the Passover "the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him" (JN 13:2). In fact he had already made the conspiracy with the chief priests and was looking for an opportunity to betray him (MK 14:11, MT 26:16). Luke (22:6) tells us that the betrayal was required so as to arrest Jesus "without collecting a crowd".

Earlier the chief priests and the pharisees had convened a meeting of the Council (the Sanhedrin) to decide "What action should we take? This man doeth many signs, If we leave him alone like this the whole populace will believe in him. Then the Romans shall come and take away both our temple and our nation. But one of them, Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said 'you know nothing at all; you do not use judgment; it is more to your interest that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should perish' (JN 11: 47-51).

True to himself John brings in the spirit of prophecy. He even gives this privilege to Caiaphas, the High Priest: "He did not say this of his own accord but as the High Priest in office that year he was prophesying that Jesus would die for the nation" (JN 11:51-52). At this point he must have realised that this meant the "Jewish nation" while he was writing for the Gentiles. So he adds: "would die not for the nation alone but to gather together the scattered children of God". In other words he was implying not just the lost sheep of the house of Israel as Jesus himself had said but all other nations as well to suit Pauline teachings.

Uptil now Jesus had been careful not to give any opportunity for a direct confrontation, or at least to get himself in unnecessary trouble. He had left Nazareth when he was not well-received there. He had left Judaea and travelled on the far shores of the Sea of Galilee. He kept his plans to visit Jerusalem secret even from his own brothers to the extent of telling them that he was not going there. He carefully went out of Jerusalem every night. It is, therefore, all the more intriguing why in the face of the imminent danger, he was not prepared to do anything now. Was it a deliberate challenge to the Jewish authority or the zeal of a martyr that was the driving force? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (JN 14:13). Could it be that having realised that the imminence of the Kingdom of God that he was preaching was no where near, he decided deliberately to lay down his life rather than submit to failure? The account of his trial later in the Gospels also shows as if he had given up all hope or else did not care.

THE DISCOURSE AT THE FEAST

During the supper he took bread and having said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them, with the words: "Take this, it is my body". Then he took a cup, and having offered thanks to God he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And he said "This is my blood, the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily, I say unto you this: I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it now in the kingdom of God" (MK 14:22-25). According to Mark this is all that happened that evening as after singing the Passover Hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives. Matthew repeats this with minor verbal changes. Both Mark and Matthew identify the betrayer before this. Luke states that the betrayer was mentioned after this. In any case, Judas was present throughout the discourse. But in the Gospel of John "He (Judas) then having received the sop went immediately and it was

night"(JN 13:30). Luke's account of the talk at the table is little longer than the other two synoptic Gospels but John avails of this opportunity, indeed the last one, for exposition of his own doctrine, since major controversies were already raging among various Christian communities on the interpretation of various dogmas now being presented to them.

After arriving at the Mount of Olives Jesus told Peter: "Before the cock crows twice, you yourself will disown me three times"(MK 14:30,MT 26:34). However, Luke(22:34) says this happened at the Last Supper before they left for the Mount of Olives. Jesus also tells them "after I am raised again I will soon go before you into Galilee"(MK 14:28,MT 26:32). John is not the one to make long things short. He would rather make short things long, throwing in a prophecy or two for good measure. His version at the Last Supper is that of a farewell discourse several different things said at a "supper" which is not a religious feast. There was no need to show Jesus carrying out a Jewish ritual as his last act. He had already accorded an elaborate farewell party to him at Bethany to compensate for this. He tells the disciples: 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and in him God is glorified'. He promises "if I go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again and receive you to myself"(JN 14:1-15).

Then, according to John, Jesus makes an announcement but which none of the synoptic Gospels report, and which will have far-reaching meaning for the future of Christianity: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another to be your comforter who will be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth"(JN 14:15-17). (NEB: Advocate; KJV,TLB: Comforter; RBV: Helper; NWT: Helper, GNB: Helper, the Holy Spirit; NIV:Counselor). "Your Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will call to mind all that I have told you"(14:26). "But when your Comforter has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth that issues from the Father, he will bear witness to me"(15:26). "If I do not go your Comforter will not come"(16:7). "There is still much that I could say to you, but the burden would be too great for you now. However, when he comes, who is the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears; and he will make known to you the things that are coming"(JN 16:12-13).

What did Jesus mean by this Advocate, Comforter, Counselor or whosoever we may like to translate the word "PARACLETE"? Did he mean another more powerful Messiah to fulfill the hope of the Jewish nation? Or, did he merely mean the Holy Spirit/Holy Ghost as the later Christians came to believe? One may also wonder, if such an important promise which has had such a profound effect on Christian thought was indeed made by Jesus! How come all the other three Gospels as well as Paul and others, do not even give a hint about it? Did they think it was not important to talk about another Messiah while they were still grappling with the issues raised by the teachings of John the Baptist and Jesus himself?(also see Appendix IV).

If these words were really said by Jesus, then these depict his feeling of leaving behind unfinished work. Or having done what was assigned to him by the 'Father', was he leaving to make way for the one who will come to complete the task of a greater significance? His disciples, as is apparent from their conduct, were not yet ready to grasp the full message, the burden would be too great for them as of now.

This is a very important farewell message. It is interesting that other three Gospels do not mention any such post-supper talk by Jesus. Why was this omitted from the other three? In

John(14:16) Jesus promises another Comforter. The original word in Greek is PARAKLETOS. Its more apt translation into English is INTERCESSOR, a human being, that is another human being like me. The Pauline Church keeps insisting that it is the Holy Ghost.

Nevertheless, there were not lacking those among the early Christians who personified the Comforter. It seemed to them that Jesus was promising a new and still another Messiah who would take on a human appearance just as Moses was considered to have prophesied Jesus in his reference to a Prophet(Isaac Asimov: The Guide to Bible). It is surprising that Paul did not assume that title!

In this discourse Jesus said very clearly: 'I shall come again and receive you to myself'(JN 14:3), and 'I am coming back to you'(14:18). What did he mean by that? Did he mean, as he said in other Gospels, "after I am raised" or did he mean "after my death I will be resurrected, go to heaven, rest there a while and come here again"? Early Christians in any case thought of "the imminent coming of the Christ" since Jesus had declared "I tell you this: there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in power"(MK 9:1). Later when "Peter asked, concerning John, Lord what will happen to him? Jesus said, If it should be my will that he wait until I come, what is it to you?"(JN 21:21-22). People waited longingly for Jesus to return to inaugurate the kingdom of God. When this did not happen for a long time, there was general disappointment and frustration among them who had endured persecution, hardship and suffering in the hope that the kingdom of God was at hand. To deal with this the later doctrinaires came up with the argument: "With the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day"(1 Pet 3:8). Interestingly if this Comforter was to "give unto you all truth"(JN 16:13) where was the need for Jesus to rise again?

John does not mention sacrament of the bread and wine at this "last supper". To him this had always been part of Jesus' teachings. He had brought this up much earlier: 'I am the bread of life'(JN 6:48-35) 'I am that living bread, the bread that I give you is my own flesh'(6:51). This had led to a fierce dispute among the Jews; 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied: 'In truth, in very truth I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you can have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood possesses eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food; my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells continually in me and I dwell in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven; and it is not like the bread which our fathers ate; they are dead, but whoever eats this bread shall live forever'(JN 6:52-58).

According to John "this was spoken in a synagogue when Jesus was teaching in Capernaum". Anyone who knows the Jewish laws on food can see that people would be offended by the mere thought of eating human flesh. The very thought would be abhorant. It is hearing such things that they said 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan, and that you are possessed?'(JN 8:48). "Now we are certain that you are possessed"(JN 8:52). Many of his own disciples on hearing it exclaimed, "This is more than we can stomach! Why listen to such talk?"(JN 6:59-60). From that time on, many of his disciples withdrew and no longer went about

with him (JN 6:66). But John insists 'Jesus knew all along who were without faith and who was to betray him' (JN 6:65).

As usual the Gospels differ on the details. MK(14:22-25) and MT(26:26-28) say that Jesus took the bread first and the cup afterwards, LK(22:17-19) says he took the cup first and the bread later. John does not mention the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. With the TWELVE partaking in the ceremony of EUCHARIST there should have been no confusion. The clue lies in Paul's statement: "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread. And when he had given thanks, he break it, and said, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner he took the cup, when he supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 COR 11:23-25). It seems none of the actual witnesses told Paul about it for he got it only through revelation. One wonders if this really happened. We may even ask: WAS THERE ANY LAST SUPPER?

The world famous painting of the Last Supper by Michelangelo shows Jesus and the Twelve seated on a long table. If John "whom Jesus loved, was leaning on Jesus' bosom" as he claims then there ought to be Thirteen. It may seem to be trivial and unimportant whether there should be twelve or thirteen but this simple mistake indicates how the people, even those connected with the Church, could accept major mistakes without giving much thought to the apparent facts.

"There is a passage in the Mithraic communion which is particularly interesting: He who shall not eat of my body nor drink of my blood so that he may be one with me and I with him, shall not be saved" (Michael Baigent, et.al.: The Messianic Legacy). If Paul were to challenge successfully the adherents of Tammuz, Jesus would have to be able to match the older god, miracle for miracle. In consequence, certain aspects of the Tammuz story were grafted on to Jesus' biography. It is significant that Bethlehem was not only David's city, but also the ancient centre of a Tammuz Cult, with a shrine that remained active well into biblical times.

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith to them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee" (MK 14:26-28). "But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice, But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all" (MK 14:29-31).

THE ARREST AND THE TRIAL

THE ARREST AT GETHSEMANE

From the Mount of Olives Jesus and his disciples came to a place called Gethsemane, he said to his disciples, Sit here while I pray. And he took Peter and James and John with him. Horror and dismay came over him, and he said to them, My heart is ready to break in grief, stop here, and stay awake. Then he went forward a little, threw himself on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, this hour might pass him by. 'Abba, Father', he said, 'all things are possible to thee, take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will, but what thou wilt'(MK 14:32-36). Matthew will not want him to be an unwilling martyr, so he only records: "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done"(MT 26:42).

According to Luke Mount of Olives was a favorite spot for Jesus — "as he was wont"(LK 22:39). This is confirmed by John: "Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples"(JN 18:2). This is surprising because according to the Synoptic Gospels this was Jesus' only visit to Jerusalem. Could it be that this was the secret pre-arranged rendezvous which the Gospels want us to believe as a "favourite spot to avoid any suspicion?

It is confusing as to why Jesus, who apparently knew that he was to be killed, would not want to slip away as was his usual practice under such circumstances. If he was now determined to face come what may, then we can understand the anguish, grief and dismay that he would feel as his heart was ready to break. His mission having seemingly failed would alone be enough for such a feeling. But for him to let horror come over him and pray that he should be spared the ordeal was not even prophet-like, let alone for the one whom the Christians consider as the Son of God, rather "God, the Son". Perhaps, as Mark(14:38) and Matthew(26:41) record "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" even for the Son of God!

One wonders who among his party was listening to him while he was making his prayerful submission to God, the Father! He had already left his disciples rather at some distance and even left behind Peter, James and John and gone forward a little as both Mark(14:35) and Matthew(26-39) tell us. In fact Luke does not mention that even these three were anywhere nearby. He gives the distance between Jesus and the others of his party to be 'about a stone's throw'(LK 26:39). Soon after this Jesus will be arrested, tried and crucified. Who then was the one who heard his prayer? Could Jesus be praying in such a loud voice that others heard him at a distance of 'about a stone's throw' even while they were asleep? Anyway, why was Jesus so worried since his mission was "according to the Scripture" and was to find fulfillment in Crucifixion followed by resurrection?

Luke(22:43-44) now gives an account which none of the other two synoptic Gospels give us: "And now there appeared to him an angel from heaven bringing him strength and in anguish of spirit he prayed the more urgently, and his sweat was like clots of blood falling to the ground". This is clearly a flight of imagination in-as-much as there was no one around to see all this in that dark night!

Lack of someone who could vouch for such statements casts serious doubts about the narratives' especially so because we note that the disciples were not only at about a stone's distance but fast asleep after a good supper topped with wine. For when Jesus "rose from the prayer and came to the disciples he found them asleep. 'Worn out by grief' (LK 14:45). He said to Peter: 'Asleep, Simon? Were you not able to stay awake for one hour? Stay awake, all of you,

and pray that you may be spared the test'. Once more he went away and prayed. On his return he found them asleep again. The third time he came and said to them, 'still sleeping? still taking your case?' (MK 14:37-41). Matthew records that he also said: Could none of you stay awake with me one hour? (MT 26:40). Such were Jesus' disciples as portrayed by the Gospels. Or, is it one of the attempts by Paul's followers to ridicule "these pillars of society" as Paul would call them? (Gal 2:8).

To John, Jesus was more than flesh — he was a deity. In his Gospel he does not mention this incident in Gethsemane. Jesus says his prayer at the supper table as part of his discourse. It is a long prayer: 'Father, the hour has come, Glorify thy son ... this is eternal life, to know thee who alone art truly God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent' (JN 17:1-3). As usual John does not leave out any opportunity to advance his own doctrine. Later Christians will make it a part of their faith notwithstanding that it speaks of "Who alone art truly God" for it speaks of One God, and Jesus Christ the Messenger of God. Those believing in Trinity will give it their own twist. After his discourse and prayer Jesus went out with his disciples and crossed the Kedron ravine. There was a garden here and he and his disciples went into it. The place was known to Judas, his betrayer, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples (JN 18:1-2).

The Gospel writers must connect Jesus' actions to some odd instance or statement in the Old Testament whether it is relevant or not. Here they make Jesus cross Kedron ravine to make it look like a 'prophecy': "For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kedron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die" (I Kg 2:37). This was the warning king Solomon had given to Shimei after restricting him to living within the walls of Jerusalem.

Suddenly, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared, and with him was a crowd armed with swords and cudgels, sent by the chief priests, lawyers, and elders. Now the traitor had agreed with them upon a signal: 'The one I kiss is your man, seize him and get him away safely'. When he reached the spot, he stepped forward at once and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi', He then kissed him. Then they seized him and held him fast (MK 14:43-46).

Matthew's account is similar but instead of 'Rabbi' he is made to say 'Hail, Rabbi' before he kissed Jesus who tells him 'Friend, do what you are here to do' (MT 26:50). Manuscripts differ and some quote "Friend, what are you here for?" This would indicate Jesus' ignorance about the betrayer's role so it is the first version which is generally accepted. These words according to Luke (22:48) were: 'Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?'

John's account of the same story has to be more elaborate and colourful. So according to him it was not an ordinary crowd armed with swords and cudgels that would make it look as if ordinary people were against Jesus. He brings in a detachment of soldiers, and police provided by the chief priests and the pharisees, equipped with lanterns, torches, and weapons. ... Jesus, knowing all that was coming upon him, went out to them and asked, 'Who is it you want?' "Jesus of Nazareth", they answered. Jesus said, 'I am he!' And there stood Judas the traitor with them (JN 18:3-5). As usual Jesus of John's story does not wait to be recognized. He goes out and meets the danger head on which is the way a Messiah should have done. The story does not end there otherwise it will look like an ordinary story. So, "when he said: 'I am he', they drew back and fell to the ground. Again Jesus asked, 'who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth' they answered, then Jesus said, 'I have told you that I am he. If I am the man you want, let these others go' (JN 18:6-8). An unnecessary request for they had already told him they only wanted 'Jesus of Nazareth'. But John has to put in a prophecy. "(This was to make good his words, I have not lost one of those whom thou gavest me)" (JN 18-19). Perhaps it is a later interpolation, being in parenthesis, by a later scribe who wanted to clarify the words.

"After Jesus was seized, one of the party drew his sword, and struck at the High Priest's servant, cutting off his ear"(MK 14:47). Some manuscripts say "One of the bystanders". Matthew(26:51) says 'One of those with Jesus'. Luke(22:49-50) says: "When his followers saw what was coming, they said, Lord, shall we use our swords?. And one of them struck...". John goes as far as naming the one who drew the sword as Simon Peter and the servant as Malchus(JN 18:10-11). Luke and John both identify that it was the right ear.

It must have been a careful cut especially since it must be assumed that Peter was a right-handed man as we do not know of him ever having been laughed at as being a left-handed one. People in ancient times particularly noted if one was left-handed. It was considered definitively something odd about that person. [For example we have in Judges(3:9): Ehud the son of Geru, a Benjamite, a left-handed man]. Or, perhaps he attacked from behind. Jesus would like us to offer the other cheek if hit on one(MT 5:39, LK 6:29), but Peter seems to have changed his mind in the face of danger. Seeing the strength of the enemy, however, he saw the futility of any fight.

Jesus in Mark's Gospel seems unconcerned with this blood-letting. He simply addresses his enemy: 'Do you take me for a bandit that you have come out with swords and cudgels to arrest me? Day after day I was within your reach as I taught in the temple, and you did not lay hands on me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled'. Then the disciples all deserted him and ran away"(MK 14:48-49).

Matthew writing later than Mark must have been mindful of the explanation needed for the sequel to the cutting of the ear. So he makes Jesus to say "Put up your sword. All who take the sword die by the sword. Do you suppose that I cannot appeal to my Father, who would at once send to my aid more than twelve legions of angels? But how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, which say that this must be?"(MT 26:52-54). It is after this that Jesus asked the crowd if they took him for a bandit. Luke writing for the Gentile readers makes Jesus say, simply: "Let them have their way"(22:51). At the same time "he touched the man's ear, he healed him". Luke also adds the following words after his query if they took him to be a bandit: 'But this is your moment, the hour when darkness reigns'(22-53). Jesus of John is not going to appease his enemy by healing the ear. He simply orders Peter to sheath his sword and boldly declares: 'This is the cup the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?'(JN 18:11).

Why were the disciples carrying swords anyway?. Luke gives us the clue. 'He said to them, 'When I sent you out barefoot without purse or pack, were you ever short of anything?. No, they answered. It is different now, he said, whoever has a purse had better take it with him, and his pack too, and if he has no sword, let him sell his cloak to buy one.... Look, Lord, they said, we have two swords here. Enough, enough, he replied(22:35-38). One wonders if Jesus really wanted them to have swords. Could it be that Jesus was so naive as to expect that just two swords were enough to face the enemy who will come in some strength?

It is very surprising that Jesus' companions were carrying swords because Jews were forbidden to carry arms during festivals in Jerusalem especially the Passover. The restriction was not only a civil one to avoid disturbance but also a religious one in view of the sanctity of the festival — or was it really at the eve of the festival? Or has the episode been concocted?

Mark winds up his version with a funny note "Among those following was a young man with nothing on but a linen cloth. They tried to seize him, but he slipped out of the linen cloth and ran away naked"(MK 14:57-52). Who was this young man? Why has his named been blocked out?(See Chapter XIII).

THE TRIAL BY THE JEWS

Then they led Jesus away to the High Priest's house, where the chief priests, elders, and doctors of law were all assembling. Peter followed him at a distance right into the High Priest's courtyard, and there he remained, sitting among the attendants, warming himself at the fire" (MK 14:53-54). For the first time in the story of Jesus after baptism we are suddenly made to realise that Jerusalem did have a weather after all. It must have been cold that night in April, so that Peter would sit at the fire warming himself while his Master was being tried. Yet it is intriguing that a short while ago a young man was standing in the open at Gethsemane wearing only a linen cloth!

Matthew (26:58) places Peter in High Priest's courtyard 'meaning to see the end of it all'. He does not mention the fire but Luke (22:55) says that they lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter sat among them.

John's story is more elaborate: The troops with their commander, and the Jewish police now arrested Jesus and secured him. They took him first to Annas" (18:12-13). (At this point there is a confusion between various manuscripts which we shall discuss later). Annas was father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest for that year, the same Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be to their interest if one man died for the whole people. Josephus identifies the high priest from 18-36 C.E. as Joseph Caiaphas indicating that Caiaphas was a family name. A lime-stone ossuary discovered in Jerusalem in November 1991 has inscribed on it the words "Joseph son of Cayfa", short for Caiaphas (Source: The Plain Truth, October 1993)].

John's Peter does not follow alone. He has another disciple with him. This "another" or sometimes 'other' disciple appears later a number of times and is supposed to be the Gospel-writer John himself "whom Jesus loved" as we have already learnt earlier. This 'other' disciple had connections at high places and was acquainted even with the High Priest himself. He uses this acquaintance to get Peter into the courtyard. The servants and the police had made charcoal fire, because it was cold, and were standing around it warming themselves. And Peter too was standing with them sharing the warmth (JN 18:18). So while John identifies the fire as charcoal fire and everyone, including Peter, warming themselves standing, other Gospels tell us that people were sitting. John(?) writing in colder Ephesus by the side of a charcoal fire in a smaller room perhaps did not realise that if it was a large body of people trying to warm themselves then it is more likely that the fire would be made out of a pile of wood rather than charcoal! The accounts differ as to what actually happened next. Mark had the chief priests, elders, and doctors of law already assembled at midnight. The chief priests and the whole council tried to find some evidence against Jesus to warrant a death sentence, but failed to find any. Many gave false evidence against him, but their statements did not tally. Some stood up and gave false evidence to this effect: We heard him say, I will pull down the temple, made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hand. But even on this point their evidence did not agree" (MK 14:55-59). It is interesting to note that while John acknowledges that Jesus said "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again".... but the temple he was speaking was his body (JN.2:19-21), Mark calls it "false evidence". Then the High Priest questioned him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One? Jesus said, 'I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God and coming with the clouds of heaven'. Then the High Priest rent his robes and said, 'Need we call further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion? [Since the trial by the Jewish council (SANHEDRIN) would be held within the precincts of the Temple it would be highly inappropriate and disrespectful for the High Priest to "rent his clothes" in public].

Their judgment was unanimous: that he was guilty and should be put to death. Some began to spit on him, blindfolded him, and struck him with fists, crying out, 'Prophecy'. And the High Priest's men set upon him with blows (MK 14:60-65).

In the meantime Peter was recognized by a number of persons, and every time he denied knowing Jesus. Having realised Jesus' fore-warning, 'he burst into tears' (MK 14:72). In actual fact the Gospels record Peter being recognized six times and thus denying knowledge of or association with Jesus six times rather than three times as Jesus is said to have forecast:

1. One of the maids of the High Priest MK (14:66-68); MT(26:69-70); LK(22:56-57).
2. Another maid MK (14:69,70); MT(26:71-72).
3. "They that stood by" MK (14:70,71); MT (26:73-74).
4. A man LK (22:58).
5. Another man an hour later LK (22:59-60).
6. One of the servants of the High Priest, JN (18:26,27).
the one who was a kinsman of Malchus whose ear was cut off by Peter. (This man is different from the ones listed at numbers 4 and 5 above since he was present at Gethsemane to witness the cutting of the 'ear and asked Peter: "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?").

There is a further complication: according to Mark(14:30) Jesus told Peter that he would deny him three times before the cock crew TWICE. However, Matthew(26:34), Luke (22:34) and John(13:38) insist that Jesus said that Peter would deny him three times before the cock crew *even once*. According to William MacDonald (The Gospel of Mark, pp 205, Emmaus Correspondance School): "It is admittedly difficult to reconcile this seeming contradiction".

What is also surprising is that Malchus' kinsman would only doubtfully recognise Peter who had drawn his sword and cut off Malchus' ear. The recognition ought to have been instant and without doubt. Granting the possibility that in coming to High Priest's place Peter may have somehow disposed off his sword he would hardly have time to camouflage in a way as to be unrecognizable. Could it be that the Holy Spirit who inspired the Gospel writers to write these Gospels inspired them differently?

Matthew thinks all this happened before Jesus was tried since according to him: "When morning came, the chief priests and the elders of the nation met in conference to plan the death of Jesus. Then they put him in chains and led away, to hand him over to Pilate, the Roman Governor" (MT 27:1-2). He does not mention the trial at the High Priest's house.

Luke is of the same view as of Matthew, but he provides some details which are different from Mark's. Tell us, they said, are you the Messiah? If I tell you, he replied, you will not believe me, and if I ask questions, you will not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of Almighty God. You are the Son of God, then? they all said, and he replied; It is you who say I am. (Some versions record: you are right, for I am). They said, need we call further witnesses? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips. With that the assembly rose, and they brought him before Pilate (LK 22:67, 23:1).

John must have his own version! Notwithstanding that Jesus had been brought to Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest and not yet before the High Priest himself, he

makes the High Priest to question Jesus about his disciples and about what he taught. Jesus replied, I have spoken openly to all the world, I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews congregate, I have said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask my hearers what I told them, they know what I said. When he said this, one of the police who was standing next to him struck him on the face, exclaiming, Is that the way to answer the High Priest? Jesus replied, If I spoke amiss, state it in evidence; if I spoke well, why strike me? (JN 18:19-23). The next verse is the verse 24 which reads thus: "So Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the High Priest". Some people think it is misplaced and should have come after verse 14 to make any sense of the questioning by the High Priest.

It is interesting that the four Gospels differ on a number of details of this important event held in the presence of many persons. The Synoptic Gospels show Jesus being tried by a Council of Chief Priests, elders, doctors of law, etc. According to John Jesus was tried only by the High Priest himself! Mark says the Jewish Council [Sanhedrin] had already assembled when Jesus was brought in rather late in the night. Later writers, having realised that as a rule in Sanhedrin could not meet in the night, record that the Council met early in the morning.

According to John the decision to kill Jesus had been taken by the Jewish Council long before the Passover soon after raising of Lazarus from the dead. This event worried the Jews. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him: and Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them named Caiaphas, being high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (JN 11:47-53). Just before the Passover "both the chief priests and the Pharisees gave a commandment, that if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him" (JN 11: 57). They were, however, cognizant of the fact that it be done "Not on the feast day, lest there be uproar of the people" (MK 14:1-2, LK 22:1-2).

This passage shows that the real reason for condemning Jesus was not that he was blaspheming since that would not have been of any threat to the Romans. What the Jewish elders were afraid of was that if people took him to be the "Promised Messiah" there might be an insurrection prompting Romans to take stern action. Jesus too must have been cautious about that as many a time he had been telling his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah and had wanted his miracles not to be publicised for that reason (MT 16:20, MK 3:12,5:43, 7:36,8:26,9:31, LK 5:14,8:15). But apparently news went around, "Surely this must be the prophet that was to come into the world; when Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed" (JN 6:14,15). Nevertheless when Jesus entered Jerusalem, people expected that "the reign of God might dawn at any moment" (LK 19:11). However, as we shall see later, the Roman Governor will find Jesus "NOT GUILTY" on the charge of claiming to be a king.

THE ROMAN TRIAL

"As soon as morning came, the chief priests, having made their plan with the elders and lawyers in full council, put Jesus in chains; then they led him away and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, Are you the king of Jews? He replied, "The words are yours" [Some quote : It is as you say]. And the Chief Priest brought many charges against him. Pilate

questioned him again: "Have you nothing to say in your defence? You see how many charges they are bringing against you. But to Pilate's astonishment, Jesus made no reply"(MK 15:1-5).

Several points need to be noted here. Firstly, after putting Jesus in chains the chief priests 'led him over to Pilate'. That they marched him through the streets is quite apparant. This seems odd as prior to this they were careful not to apprehend him publicly which they could have easily done as we know from earlier parts of the story that Jesus was lecturing publicly even in the precincts of the Temple itself. The evident involvement of Judas Iscariot was in order to arrest him 'without collecting a crowd'(LK 22:6). And here he was being put in chains and marched through the crowded streets of Jerusalem at the time of the Passover festival. Many of those in the streets must have been Galileans and sympathisers of Jesus, let alone those who firmly believed in him. None of the Gospels tell us if there was any disturbance while Jesus was being led through the street. In any case it might have been prudent to wait until the Passover was over now that Jesus had been secured and would not be the source of trouble anymore. But somehow they seemed to be in a hurry which is not explained by any of the Gospels. Secondly, apparently Pilate knew at least some background to the affair as even before the chief priests brought any charges, he asked him "Are you the king of Jews?" Funny, he did not ask him 'Are you the one who calls himself the king of Jews?' because that question would make more sense. Thirdly, Jesus is depicted here as the "meek lamb of God", not caring about what was happening, willing, rather wanting, to be a martyr or perhaps knowing that whatever he says will not matter and had therefore resigned to his fate forsaken by friends and followers.

Matthew writing somewhat later tells us who this Pilate was: the Roman Governor. He also tells us that at this point Judas was seized with remorse, returns the thirty silver pieces to the chief priests who (later perhaps) bought a piece of land, "the Potter's Field", for burial of foreigners. This would be yet another of the prophecies which the Gospel writers are very much fond of quoting. Matthew quotes an "utterance of Jeremiah". In actual fact the original quotation is from Zechariah and Matthew seems to have erred here despite his divine inspiration. Zech(11:13): "And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord". The whole thing is a mistake and mistranslation of the original word where potter actually means "treasury". In other words the money was paid into the "treasury of the Temple" as a donation while the blood money could not go into something so sacred.

Matthew reports that after having returned the money Judas "went and hanged himself"(26:75). Neither Luke nor John, the later Gospel writers, mention this in their Gospels. However, Luke writing in the book of "Acts" tells us that "this man [Judas] purchased a field with the reward of iniquity and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out"(Acts 1:8). We do not know whom to believe, but that is a different matter.

Matthew does not add much to the main trial but Luke, writing for the Gentiles tries to account for some inconsistencies in the story. It is said that it was a Roman procedure that any person accused of a major offence must face the consequences in the area of his own jurisdiction. We learn this from Paul's own case where he claims his Roman citizenship to avoid punishment: "Can you legally flog a man who is a Roman citizen, and moreover has not been found guilty?" When the centurion heard this, he went and reported it to the commandant. 'What do you mean to do?' he said. 'This man is a Roman citizen'. The commandant came to Paul. "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" he asked. 'Yes' said he. The commandant retorted, 'It cost me a large sum to acquire this citizenship'. Paul said, 'But it was mine by birth'. Then those who were about to examine him withdrew hastily, and the commandant himself was alarmed

when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had put him in irons (Acts 22:25-29). Jesus was from Nazareth which was in the kingdom of Herod. Luke wants us to believe that Pilate was not in his jurisdiction to try Jesus. This is not necessarily so because if Jesus was guilty of any of the various charges then these crimes had been perpetrated in Jerusalem and so within Roman jurisdiction. Paul's case concerning privileges of a Roman citizen is strictly not relevant. But for the time being, on with the trial!

Luke's version of the trial by the Jewish council is as of the morning. After deciding on their verdict the whole assembly rose and they brought him before Pilate. They opened the case before him by saying, 'We found this man subverting our nation, opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be a Messiah, a king. (KJV, NIV, NWT: "Christ, a King". According to some "an anointed king"). Pilate asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' He replied, 'The words are yours'. Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no case for this man to answer (LK 23:1-4). Luke opens the case properly, Pilate speaks appropriately, and gives his verdict. 'But the chief priests insisted: "His teaching is causing disaffection among the people all through Judaea. It started from Galilee and has spread as far as this city" (LK 23:5). Pilate realised that if Jesus belonged to Galilee and not Judaea then he could not punish the accused for it was not his jurisdiction! Luke thus found perhaps a solution to his dilemma or a divine plan he was inspired to know! Pilate too must have felt relieved. He could not understand what was going on. If it was a blasphemy then he, a pagan Roman, would care two hoots about it. If it was Trinity that Jesus was talking about (assuming that he did and they accused him of that, though we find no such allegation. Uptil now it was Me and My Father, none of the third partner) then Pilate, the Roman Governor, would have found nothing wrong with that as the Romans themselves had originated the concept of TRIUMVIRATE where Rome was ruled by a junta of "THREE EQUALS" to avoid civil war. Surprisingly Pilate does not seem to have questioned Jesus on the charge more important to Pilate, that of exhorting people not to pay taxes.

"When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilean, and on learning that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction he remitted the case to him, for Herod was also in Jerusalem at that time" (LK 23:6-7). Since trial had to be finished that very day Luke does not send Jesus to Herod's capital, but rather brings Herod (Antipas) to Jerusalem and why not? Was he not a Jew who may also have wanted to perform the pilgrimage? – not-withstanding that Pilate and Herod were not in good terms.

"When Herod saw Jesus he was greatly pleased; having heard about him, he had long been wanting to see him, and had been hoping to see some miracle performed by him. He questioned him at some length without getting any reply; but the chief priest and lawyers appeared and pressed the case against him vigorously. Then Herod and his troops treated him with contempt and ridicule, and sent him back to Pilate dressed in a gorgeous robe. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends; till then there had been a standing feud between them" (LK 23:8-12). One can imagine the new understanding between the two adversaries after this gesture of exchange of "gifts". But what is intriguing is as to why did Herod not punish Jesus! The crime was basically that of blasphemy, a religious matter, and if Sanhedrin, the High Jewish Council, could not carry out a verdict of death by stoning, Herod was fully capable and within his own jurisdiction and prerogative to do that. Why did he not act? Perhaps he may have found him harmless and innocent. Well, in any case, this removed the legal lacuna. Now Pilate was in full jurisdiction of the case. [It is not understandable that if Herod, whose jurisdiction it was to try the case, also decided that Jesus was innocent, then how could it now become Pilate's jurisdiction to resume the trial!].

THE VERDICT

"Pilate now called together the chief priests, councillors, and people, and said to them, you brought this man before me on a charge of subversion. But, as you see, I have myself examined him in your presence and found nothing in him to support your charges. No more did Herod, for he has referred him back to us. Clearly he has done nothing to deserve death. I, therefore, propose to let him off with a flogging"(LK 23:13-18).

John's story could not be short and straight-forward. He must have a narrative full of drama. "From Caiaphas Jesus was led into Governor's headquarters. It was now early morning, and the Jews themselves stayed outside the headquarters to avoid defilement, so that they could eat the Passover meal. So Pilate went out to them and asked, 'What charges do you bring against this man?' 'If he were not a criminal', they replied, 'we should not have brought him before you.' Pilate said, 'Take him away and try him by your own law'. The Jews answered, 'We are not allowed to put any man to death'(JN 18:28-31). It is intriguing that not much later the same people would stone Stephen, one of the disciples of Jesus, to death for similar charges(Acts 7:58). Later in about 62 C.E. Jesus' own brother James was stoned to death on the orders of Annas, the High Priest. Yet they were not willing to stone Jesus to death. According to Luke this was in 'fulfilment of the words by which Jesus had indicated the manner of his death'(LK 18:32).

John fills in the blanks left by the other three Gospel writers. He makes Jesus talk to Pilate: "Pilate then went back into his headquarters and summoned Jesus. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked. [Some versions quote: You are the king of Jews, I take it]. Jesus said, 'Is that your idea, or have others suggested it to you?' 'What, am I a Jew?' said Pilate. 'Your own nation and their chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?' Jesus replied, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere'. 'You are a king then?' said Pilate. Jesus said, "King" is your word. My task is to bear witness to the truth. For this was I born; for this I came into the world, and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice'. Pilate said, 'What is truth?', and with those words went out again to the Jews. 'For my part, he said, 'I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Would you like me to release the king of the Jews?' Again the clamour rose: Not him; we want Barabbas(Barabbas was a bandit)". (John 18:33- 40).

Who was this BARABBAS? John suddenly brings up his name. Why would people want him to be released while Pilate was asking if he may release the "king of the Jews"? Mark has already given some information about him in his Gospel and why his name comes up: 'At the festival season the Governor asked to release one prisoner at the people's request. As it happened the man known as Barabbas was then in custody with the rebels who had committed murder in the rising'(MK 15:6-8). Matthew calls him "a man of some notoreity"(MT 27:16). Luke says, 'this man had been put in prison for a rising that had taken place in the city, and for murder'(LK 23:19).

"When the crowd came asking for the usual favour Pilate replied, 'Do you wish me to release for you that "king of the Jews?" For he knew it was out of malice that they had brought Jesus before him. But the chief priests incited the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas rather than Jesus. Pilate spoke to them again; 'Then what shall I do with the man you call king of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' 'Why, what harm has he done?' Pilate asked; but they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'(MK 15:17-14). Luke says "For the third time he spoke to them, 'Why, what wrong has he done? I have not found him guilty of any capital

offence. I will, therefore, let him off with a flogging'. But they insisted in their demand, shouting that Jesus be crucified. Pilate asked the crowd "Then what I am to do with Jesus called Messiah?" and with one voice they answered, 'Crucify him'(MT 27:22).

According to John the whole affair could not be that short and simple, so; 'Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, 'Here he is; I am bringing him out to let you know that I find no case against him'(JN 19:4-5). But before this Pilate took and had him flogged "and the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on his head, and robed him in a purple cloak. Then time after time they came up to him, crying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!', and struck him on the face'(JN 19:1-3). It is strange that on the one hand Pilate concludes that Jesus was innocent and yet he had him flogged! It seems he may have thought that being a non-Jew himself he did not fully apprehend the nature of the crime and if he had Jesus flogged the crowd would be satisfied and go home. His offer to release Jesus as a goodwill gesture is also confusing in the face of the actual Jewish demand of death for Jesus and depicts him as rather naive.

".....and Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. 'Behold the Man!', said Pilate. The chief priests and their henchmen saw him and shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify!' 'Take him and crucify him yourselves', said Pilate; for my part I find no case against him. The Jews answered, 'We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has claimed to be Son of God'. When Pilate heard that, he was more afraid than ever, and going back to his headquarter, he asked Jesus, 'Where have you come from? But Jesus gave him no answer. 'Do you refuse to speak to me?' said Pilate. 'Surely you know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?' You would have no authority at all over me' Jesus replied, "if it had not been granted you from above, and the deeper guilt lies with the man who handed me over to you". From that moment Pilate tried hard to release him'(JN 19:5-12).

Pilate's hesitance in accepting the demand of "the Jews" as John would describe the high priests and the crowd, is quite understandable. He himself would not care what the Jewish "Law" would like to do with those guilty of blasphemy. He was a pagan Roman himself and could not accept the demand especially the penalty of death for what he himself stated to be "not a capital offence". Still, he had Jesus flogged in the hope that this will placate them. He went over the head of the chief priests and addressed the crowd directly in the hope they would like him to release Jesus. But as always in the Gospel there are angels, miracles, and the like only up the sleeve of the Gospel-writers. Even though three of the Gospels do not mention it, Matthew has another reason why Pilate, the superstitious Roman would not want to harm Jesus: "While Pilate was sitting in the court a message came to him from his wife: Have nothing to do with that innocent man; I was much troubled on his account in my dreams last night"(MT 27:28).

It is unfortunate that due to later doctrinal problems much of the literature and scriptures of rival churches was destroyed on pain of death to their holders. Some of the literature has, however (shall we say, miraculously?), survived and gives insight into concurrent thought. One of such apocryphal literature is "Letters of Herod and Pilate" which are recorded in a Syriac manuscript in the British Museum. According to this, Tiberius Caesar was afflicted with a disease and having heard of the miraculous healer (Jesus) was interested to have himself cured by a miracle. By that time Jesus had already been crucified. "Now when the letters came to the city of the Romans and were read to Caesar with no few standing there, they were all terrified, "because, through the transgression of Pilate, the darkness and the earthquake had happened to all the world". Pilate and his wife were brought to Rome and he was tried for this iniquitous act. "And when Pilate came to the place, he prayed in

silence, saying, O Lord, destroy not me with the wicked Hebrews, for I should not have laid hands upon thee, but for the nation of the lawless Jews, because they provoked sedition against me; but thou knowest that I did it in ignorance. Destroy me not for this my sin, nor be mindful of the evil that is in me. O Lord, and in thy servant Procla who standeth with me in this hour of my death, whom thou taughtest to prophecy that thou must not be nailed to the cross". The Synaxaria of the Greeks under October 28th, intimate the Commemoration of Procla, the wife of Pilate. The Aethiopic Calender inserts "Pilate and his wife Procla" under June 25th. The reason for putting these names among the 'saints' is that Pilate by washing his hands attested the innocence of Jesus, while Procla sought to dissuade her husband from complying with the Jews. This story thus makes Pilate also a martyr. The story of "sedition" and "washing of hands" follows. But this, just one of perhaps hundreds of documents in circulation in the next three centuries, indicates the trend of various schools of thought and the confusion flourishing during that period. Now back to the Gospels.

'But the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend to Caesar; any man who claims to be a king is defying Caesar'(JN 19:12). Apparently that did the trick. Pilate who had been going in and out, sometimes talking to Jesus in his headquarters, sometimes bringing him out, sometimes taking him back in for interrogation, sometimes with the crowd outside because they could not come in the court for fear of religious 'defilement', now decides to take action. He would not dare to have a charge of sedition against his own self.

"When Pilate heard what they were saying, he took his seat on the tribunal at the place known as 'The Pavement'('Gabbatha' in the language of the Jews). It was the eve of the Passover. (some versions: It was Friday in Passover), about noon. Pilate said to the Jews, 'Here is your king'. They shouted, 'Away with him! Crucify him!' 'Crucify your king?' said Pilate. We have no king but Caesar', the Jews replied. Then at last, to satisfy them, he handed Jesus over to be crucified(JN 19:13-16). Mark(15:15) says: "So Pilate, in his desire to satisfy the mob, released Barabbas to them; and he had Jesus flogged and handed over to be crucified". Luke gives a similar version but Matthew adds: 'Pilate could see nothing was being gained and a riot was starting; so he took water and washed his hands in full view of the people saying, 'My hands are clean of this man's blood; see to that yourselves'. And with one voice the people cried, 'His blood be on us, and on our children'(MT 27:24-25). This little sentence has caused a lot of persecution for the Jews and their descendant generations over the past twenty centuries. At the hands of the Christians they have had to pay a heavy price for this in life, property, and honour. 'He then released Barabbas to them; but had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified'.

Mark has the last incidence in this episode: "Then the soldiers took him inside the courtyard (the Governor's headquarters, Greek: Praetorium) and called together the whole company. They dressed him in a purple robe, and plaiting a crown of thorns, placed it on his head. Then they began to salute him with, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They beat him about the head with a cane and spat upon him, and then knelt and paid mock homage to him. When they had finished their mockery, they stripped him of the purple robe and dressed him in his own clothes"(MK 15:16-20). Matthew, however, records that they stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet mantle, with a cane in his right hand(MT 27:28- 29).

There is an incident which John quotes in his own peculiar style which should have occurred about this time but is recorded by John later in connection with crucifixion; 'And Pilate wrote an inscription to be fastened to the cross; it read, 'Jesus of Nazerath, King of the Jews'. This inscription was read by many Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far

from the city, and the inscription was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. Then the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of Jews"; write: "He claimed to be king of the Jews"', Pilate replied, 'What I have written, I have written' (JN 19:19-22). It is surprising that Pilate who did not think Jesus was guilty, was forced to pass the sentence against his own will and wife's foreboding, and washed his hands off his blood, would now be in a mood to mock the condemned man and go to such trouble as to make an inscription in three languages in his own hand writing. [Apparantly out in public for the 'Jewish chief priests' to be present and commenting]. This is John's style!

The same incident is reported by Mark in just one sentence: "the inscription giving the charge against him read, "The king of the Jews"(MK 15:26). According to Matthew(27:37) it read: "This is Jesus the king of the Jews". Luke(23:38) says it was "This is the king of the Jews". It appears as if there must have been a custom to instal such an inscription on the crosses of all criminals who were crucified by Romans. However, not even the Gospels talk about such inscription having been installed on the crosses of the other two criminals who were crucified at the same time and place as Jesus. In any case, Mark does not mention the language in which this inscription was written, let alone it being in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. [It is doubtful if Pilate could write in Hebrew]. It is quite possible that John may be making a mountain out of a molehill!

It is perplexing how much the four Gospels, "the inspired words of God", as the Christians consider them, differ with respect to this important episode which must have been seen by a "crowd" of people. At least Peter was around and possibly the 'disciple whom Jesus loved' unless they decided that what they had seen at the High Priest's trial of Jesus was enough and they need no more be interested in the fate of their Lord and Master. Peter had pledged not to desert Jesus even when others had done it(MK 14:30, MT 26:35). He had been willing to go with him to prison or death(LK 22:33). The least he could do was to be around, even though in dark corners, to see what they would be doing to Jesus. But throughout the Gospels, nothing is said of what Peter saw. The 'beloved disciple', if he was really the one who wrote the Gospel of John and to which he gives his personal attestation(JN 21:24) to all that he wrote, should perhaps be expected to witness all that was happening. But he too does not say that he was around. It is, however, intriguing how John, a Galilean non-descript, could have had intimate connection with the High Priest and his household(JN 18:15). Some scholars conjecture that with his stated connection with the household of the high priest he may perhaps be an influential person from Jerusalem and the local connection who may have arranged the colt as well as that large upper chamber where Jesus had his last supper, which may also be the reason he was present there even though he was not otherwise as intimate a disciple as the Twelve. [See also Chapter XIII].

The synoptic Gospels say Jesus did very little talking. John tells us that Jesus argued his case. Mark tells us that the soldiers put a purple robe over Jesus after he was handed over to be crucified. Matthew says it was a scarlet mantle. Luke tells us that this was done before the trial, at Herod's court where they dressed him in a "gorgeous robe" before returning him to Pilate. Some say he was flogged before being condemned while others say he was flogged after the verdict. If people did not remember all what was happening before their eyes, could they be expected to remember what they heard with all that "near riot" with the crowd shouting for Jesus' crucifixion all that morning until Pilate pronounced his verdict past noontime (JN 19:14) at GABBATHA?

Before we proceed any further, it is important to note that after passing the sentence Pilate did not hand over Jesus, now condemned to be crucified apparently for crime against Caesar, to the Roman guard but instead 'he delivered him to their will'(LK 23:25, JN 19:16). Thus he returned the prisoner to "the Jews", not to be stoned to death, but to take him to Golgotha/Calvary, the site for crucifixion where a Roman Centurion and his four(?) soldiers would be ready to receive the condemned prisoner as if it was a normal, everyday affair. We are not told when the two "malefactors"(LK 23:32), who were being taken along with Jesus to be crucified, were tried and why they were being crucified along with Jesus. If their crucifixion had been delayed for some reason then why not delay till after the Passover? What was the hurry in their case?

"Whatever Pilate's reasons for deciding to have Jesus put to death, it is not true that the Jewish crowds shouted out that Jesus should be crucified"(MK 15:12). Or that they took his blood upon themselves and their children(MT 27:25). Nor did the high priest tell the prefect We have no king but Caesar(JN 19:5). These sentences, which were later written into the accounts of Jesus' passion, are the product of a bitter polemic between early Christianity and Judaism and have helped to cause the horrors of two millennia of anti-Semitism"(Amy Clampitt: The Epistle to The Thessalonians, in Incarnation, ed. Alfred Corn).



Crux Quadrata
(Greek Cross)



Crux Immissa
(Latin Cross)



Crux Commissa
(Tau or St Anthony's Cross)



Crux Decussata
(St Andrew's Cross)



Crux Ansata (Ankh Cross)
The Egyptian Hieroglyphic
Symbol of Life



Crux Gammata
(Swastika)



Chi - Rho Monogram



Celtic Cross

MAJOR TYPES OF CROSSES

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE BURIAL

CRUCIFIXION AT GOLGOTHA

"Then they took him out to crucify him. A man called Simon, from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they pressed him into service to carry his cross. They brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means 'Place of a Skull'. He was offered drugged wine, but he would not take it. Then they fastened him to the cross"(MK 15:21-24). Matthew(27:32) and Luke(23:26) also record that the cross was carried for Jesus by Simon of Cyrene, a city which is in the present day Libya. Jesus had said "No one who does not carry his cross and come with me can be disciple of mine"(LK 14:27). It is quite likely that Jesus may not have said it as during his own lifetime carrying of the cross could not have had any significance to his followers. But John having so read this in the earlier Gospel, could not bear the thought of even Jesus himself not *carrying his own cross*. So he contradicts this: "Jesus was now taken in charge and, carrying his own cross, went out to the place of the Skull, as it is called (or, in the language of the Jews, GOLGOTHA), where they crucified him"(JN 19:17).

"The hour of crucifixion was nine in the morning....two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left"(MK 15:25-27). In KJV is included: "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, "And he was numbered with the transgressors"(MK 15:28). NEB, NWT and NIV omit this verse, being possibly a later interpolation. According to John this could not have happened at nine in the morning because Pilate had taken his seat for judgment "about noon"(JN 19:14).

It is rather disappointing that none of the Gospels tell us the actual process of crucifixion. How did they impale Jesus? Did they tie him or nail him? It looks as if Jesus was only TIED to the cross and NOT NAILED to it! Had this been done someone somewhere ought to have told us that Jesus or at least two of the thieves had cried of pain while nails were being pierced through their hands and ankles. Was there any bleeding? In fact we are not told so much as where Jesus was unchained. We get no details not even a hint as to how it was done. It seems as if the three of them were NOT NAILED but just tied to the cross. The case of the Doubting Thomas(JN 20) we shall deal with later.

Curiously enough it is in the discarded "Gospel of Peter"(Chapter 6) that we learn that "they drew out the nails from the hands of the Lord". The Christian churches do not accept this particulars Gospel to be canonical or true. In fact copies of this Gospel were particularly hunted down and burnt and no copies are available today. We only get some references to it in early Christian literature.

A further complication into this episode is added by Peter and other apostles: "The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging on a tree"(Acts 5:30). We can only be perplexed by this. Paul, who also made a similar statement was only stretching the words to fit the event to the text of the scriptures. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree"(Gal 3:13). This is with reference to Deuteronomy(21:22-23): 'And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is to be put to death.... for a hanged man is accursed of God'. This was Jewish punishment for a non-religious offense. For religious blasphemy the punishment was death by

stoning. Crucifixion was a Roman practice actually abhorred by the Jews. Luke was only taking a cue from Paul.

Mark and Matthew make the crucifixion a simple affair. Strangely enough John also does not make it long. Luke, however, puts in something which could have happened: "great number of people followed, many women among them who mourned and lamented over him" (LK 23:27). Jesus then makes a speech prophesying the destruction of the Temple and persecution of the Jews. This is again a case of making an event fit to, or look like, some prophecy. Luke was writing all this at a time when Temple had just been destroyed by the Romans. This speech is also not typical of Jesus for, if at all, he would have been telling them of the imminence of the kingdom of God and the need for repentance.

CASTING LOTS FOR CLOTHES

After fastening Jesus to the cross, "they divided his clothes among them by casting lots" (LK 23:34). According to some versions (NEB, NIV, NWT) V.34 is just this small sentence. Other versions (eg. KJV, RBV) also insert: "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing'. According to Mark (15:24) "they divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should have". Matthew's version (27:35) is similar. But John must outdo others: "the soldiers, having crucified Jesus, took possession of his clothes, and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier, leaving out the tunic. the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece throughout; so they said to one another, 'we must not tear this; let us toss for it'; and thus the text of scripture came true: 'they share my garments among them, and cast lots for my clothing' (JN 19:23-24). Another event fitted to a biblical text!

Generally in Christian literature we see pictures of Jesus on the cross with a small loin cloth around him. While we may remain in doubt whether Jesus had enough clothes to go around, we gather from all the four gospels that he was indeed stripped of all his garments except perhaps for the loin cloth. But John makes it clear that (1) there were four soldiers (2) each one got a share. However, the tunic was extra and by casting lots it was being decided who will get this tunic. There is, however, a likelihood that these four lots contained the clothes of the bandits as well; since it is not likely that Jesus had six garments on him. The Gospels do not give this out. If casting of the lots for dividing the clothes of the victims of crucifixion was common practice then it should have no relevance to the "prophecy" since the lots were being drawn for the clothes of the bandits as well, and if it was not important in their case then why so in case of Jesus? After all, if Jesus had been stripped of his clothes at the Governor's headquarters (MT 27: 28-29) then why were the soldiers at Golgotha drawing lots for these?

DRUGGED WINE

As soon as Jesus arrived at Golgotha the soldiers offered him some wine mingled with myrrh (MK 15:23). According to Matthew (27:39) the wine was mixed with gall. Myrrh is "a fragrant, gummy substance with a bitter taste used in medicines, perfumes and incense". Gall is "lump or ball that forms on the leaves, stems, or roots of plants where they have been injured by insects or fungi". (Source: Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary). Whether myrrh or gall was mixed with the wine there must have been a purpose. Indeed MET, NEB, NWT and TLB say that the wine was "drugged". This may be humane gesture to reduce suffering. Gall and Vinegar, on the other hand, would be an heartless act of furthering the torture. But how else could Matthew use an old "prophecy": They gave me gall for my meat and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Ps 69:21). Mark says that Jesus "received it not" but Matthew records that "he had tasted thereof" but did not drink it.

According to Luke(23:36) the soldiers offered him vinegar(KJV, NIV, RBV, RSV, TJB)/sour wine MET, NAB, NAB, NWT, TLB)/cheap wine (GNB) but this offer was made not before crucifixion, as stated by Mark and Matthew, but after Jesus had been impaled on the Cross. Both Mark and Matthew state that the offer after crucifixion was made not by the soldiers but by one of the bystanders(MK 15:36, MT 27:48) and thus Jesus was offered wine/vingegar before as well as after crucifixion. John (19:29) records that the offer was made only after crucifixion but is not explicit whether it was offered by the soldiers or a bystander: "they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth". So there is a confusion even on this instance connected with crucifixion watched by many. It is noteworthy that both the soldiers and the bystanders had their own stock of wine/vinegar, etc., ready at the "Place of a skull"(Latin; Calvary; Aramaic: Golgotha). Apparently the two bandits who were being crucified alongwith Jesus were not offered any wine/vinegar. [Incidentally "hyssop officials" does not grow in the region].

Whatever the trespasses for which Jesus may (or may not) have been crucified, the Gospel accounts of his alleged death are fraught with inconsistencies, ambiguities and inaccuracies. See Chapter X, for a detailed analysis].

WHO SAW THE CRUCIFIXION?

There were at least four soldiers including the Centurion [who should be commanding about 100 soldiers!] and "great number of people, many women among them". It was the time of the preparation for the Passover festival and local people must have been busy preparing for the religious occasion. In Jerusalem crucifixion were not rare. But there are always young men and loafers willing to while their time at such a spectacle anyway. There were out-of-town pilgrims to whom these crucifixions must be an unfamiliar sight. then there were chief priests and lawyers ready at hand to make sure that Jesus met his desired end. This is most unlikely since Golgotha/Place of the Skull was a defiled place and any Jew worth his name would not go even near it for he would then need a period of seven days to be purified.

According to Mark(15:40-41) "A number of women were also present, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome who had followed him and waited on him when he was in Galilee and there were others who had come upto Jerusalem with him. Matthew(27:56) identifies "Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee". Could Salome be the mother of sons of Zebedee? Luke does not give names: "His friends had all been standing at a distance, the women who had accompanied him from Galilee stood with them and watched it all"(LK 23:49). We are not told who these "friends" were but they certainly did not include any of the "Twelve"(by now only eleven). But John the beloved disciple could not be content with such non-descript description and so he brings in Jesus' mother as well as himself: "But meanwhile near the cross where Jesus hung stood his mother, with her sister, Mary wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus saw his mother with the disciple whom he loved standing beside her. He said to her, 'Mother, there is your son'; and to the disciple, 'There is your mother'; and from that moment the disciple took her into his home"(JN 19:25-27). But we never again hear about his taking care of her even though beside the Gospel itself he is credited with three Epistles and the Book of Revelation. The only mention of Virgin Mary after the crucifixion event is a solitary appearance with the disciples at the time of Pentecost(Acts 1:14).

One wonders why is it that Jesus' brothers who were in Jerusalem did not come to the site of crucifixion. We can attempt to explain by the fact that the canonical Gospels were written by those nearer to Paul and it is the Pauline doctrine which later became dominant.

Systematic efforts were made to obliterate whatever could give any authority or respect to anyone who differed with Paul. Even though Jesus' brothers had been skeptic of Jesus, or so we are told, James (the Just) became leader of the mother church at Jerusalem. We do not hear much about the original disciples or their writings because they had been against Paul's new doctrine and practices. Thus when his opponants would point to Paul's background of persecution of Jesus' disciples, Paul's proponants could point out to the "disbelief" of James (the Just) and Jesus' other family members. John, writer (?) of the last of the four canonical Gospels, could not leave Mary under the charge of such a disbelieving and skeptic lot. Furthermore, the honour of being the guardian of the "Mother of God" entrusted to him by none other than "God, the Son" himself would lend considerable authority to him, "the disciple whom Jesus loved". It is only in connection with resurrection that Paul would mention James (Jesus' brother) and "all the disciples" (1 Cor 15:7) and that too casually. None of the Gospels say so, however. It looks as if Paul was saying "they deserted the Lord and now they are disputing with me".

John does not mention anything about the reaction of the crowd. He brings Mary (mother of Jesus) and others nearer to the cross while others Gospels do not mention such an important person as Jesus' mother herself. Mark reports "the passers-by hurled abuse at him: Aha, they cried, wagging their heads, you would pull the temple down, would you, and build it in three days? Come down from the cross and save yourself. So too the chief priests and lawyers jested with one another: He saved others, they said, but cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross. If we see that we shall believe. Even those who were crucified with him taunted him"(MK: 15:29-33). Matthew adds: Did he trust in God? Let God rescue him, if he wants him — for he said he was God's son(MT 27:43). Luke says that 'One of the criminals who hang there with him taunted him: 'Are not you the Messiah? Save yourself, and us. But the other rebuked him: Have you no fear of God? you are under the same sentence as he. For us it is plain justice: we are paying the price of our misdoeds; but this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come to your throne. He answered: I tell you this, 'today you shall be with me in Paradise'(LK 23:39-43). It is very likely that some sect or cult may have canonised this Bandit No.2 (at right or left, we do not know) after his "confession of his own guilt and acceptance of the innocence of Jesus". Unfortunately, according to the Gospels, Jesus did not keep that promise and instead of accompanying the good bandit straight to paradise, Jesus spent three days in hell, came back to the Earth, stayed here for forty days and then "ascended" to be on the right hand of God. We shall come to that later.

THE FINAL SCENE

"At midday a darkness fell over the whole land, which lasted till three in the afternoon; and at three Jesus cried aloud, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachtham?" which means, 'My god, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? [Some versions say: why hast thou shamed me?]. Some of the bystanders, on hearing this said, 'Hark, he is calling Elijah'. A man ran and soaked a sponge in sour wine and held it to his lips on the end of a cane. Let us see, he said, if Elijah will come to take him down. Then Jesus gave a loud cry and died. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion who was standing opposite him saw how he died, he said, truly this man was a son of God"(MK 15:33-39). How he deduced that Jesus was a son of God, we do not know because for a Roman to be a "son of god" would mean a hero in triumph. How Mark decided whether he said 'son of god' or 'Son of God, is also not revealed by his inspired work.

CHRIST DID NOT DIE ON THE CROSS

LONDON: Jesus Christ did not die on the cross and his resurrection was only a resuscitation, two British researchers claimed in an article published on Friday. Christ lost consciousness on the cross due to a drop in blood pressure, but "his ashen skin and immobility were mistaken for death and there is no doubt that the bystanders believed he was dead", according to Trevor Lloyd Davies, 82, and his wife Margaret, a theologian.

"The circulation was restored when he was taken down from the cross and laid on the ground, As Jesus showed signs of life he was not placed in a tomb but taken away and tended" according to the article in the Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London. Mr and Mrs Lloyd Davies noted that Christ was said to have died after six hours on the cross, according to the gospels. Whereas most people crucified suffered as long as three or four days.

Mr Lloyd Davies asked the church not to get "steamed up" over his theory, saying "the Church will be stronger if it accommodates proven knowledge within its creeds". Church officials noted that scientists have long attempted to find explanations of the resurrection and other miracles.--- AFP

THE NEWS
ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
April 28, 1991

To the above description Matthew adds; "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. There was an earthquake, the rocks split and the graves opened, and many of God's saints were raised from sleep; and coming out of the graves after his resurrection they entered the Holy City where many saw them. And when the centurion and his men who were keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake, and all that was happening, they were filled with awe, and they said, Truly this man was a son of God'(MT 27:51-54). Luke gives a briefer account but adds: "then Jesus gave a loud cry and said 'Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit', and with these words he died. The centurion saw it all, and gave praise to God. 'Beyond all doubt', he said, 'this man was innocent'. The crowd who had assembled for the spectacle, when they saw what had happened, went home beating their breasts"(LK 23:46-48).

"After that, Jesus, aware that all had now come to its appointed end, said in fulfillment of Scripture, 'I thirst'. A jar stood there full of sour wine(KJV: Vinegar; NIV: Wine Vinegar); so they soaked a sponge with the wine, fixed it on a javelin(KJV), RBV: put it on hyssop; NWT: hyssop stalk; NIV, TLB: on a stalk branch of the hyssop plant; some versions: on marjoram) and held it up to his lips. Having received the wine, he said, 'It is accomplished!'(KJV), TLB, NIV: It is finished'. He bowed his head and gave up his spirit(JN 19:28-30). Strangely, John the one who should have dramatised this important incidence does not take advantage of the drama of darkness, earthquake, splitting of rocks, and saints coming out of graves. Perhaps he could not find a matching prophecy. He may have considered that his Gentile readers would not accept such extraordinary events without some after effect — realisation by the Jews, or the Romans that, as the Centurion put it "this man was a son of God" or at least that "he was innocent". In fact seeing all this the whole of Jerusalem should have arisen and surrounded the High Priest for his part in killing this "innocent man" or "son of God" whatever the choice of words. But this did not happen!

But he adds some other colour to the story. "Because it was the eve of Passover (some versions: the day of preparation, or Friday in Passover), the Jews were anxious that the bodies should not remain on the cross for the coming Sabbath, since that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity; so they requested Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers accordingly came to the first of his fellow victims and to the second, and broke their legs; but when they came to Jesus they found that he was already dead so they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers stabbed his side with a lance, and at once there was a flow of blood and water"(JN 19:31-34). Sure enough John finds two, not just one, prophecies to match the event; for this happened in fulfilment of the text of Scripture: "No bone of his shall be broken. And another text says, they shall look on him whom they pierced"(JN 19:36-37).

While John says that it was eve of the Passover, the Synoptic Gospels tell us that Jesus had already eaten the Passover meal the night before!

THE BURIAL

"By this time evening had come; and as it was Preparation-day (that is, the day before the Sabbath) Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, a man who looked forward to the kingdom of God, bravely went into Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead; so he sent for the centurion and asked him whether it was long since he died. And when he heard the centurion's report, he gave Joseph leave to take the dead body. So Joseph bought a linen sheet, took him down from the cross, and wrapped him in the sheet. Then he laid him in a tomb cut out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the entrance. And Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joseph, were watching and saw where he was laid"(MK 16:42-47).

Matthew reports that Joseph, a man of Arimathaea, was a man of means and had himself become a disciple of Jesus. He does not mention the confirmation of Jesus' death by the centurion. "Then Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen sheet, and laid it in his own unused tomb, which he had cut out of the rock; he then rolled a large stone against the entrance, and went away. Mary of Magdala was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave" (MT 27:59-61).

Luke calls Joseph a member of the Council, a good upright man, who had dissented from their policy and the action they had taken. "This man now approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Taking it down from the cross, he wrapped it in a linen sheet, and laid it in a tomb, cut out of the rock, in which no one had been laid before. It was Friday, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had accompanied him (Jesus) from Galilee followed; they took note of the tomb and observed how his body was laid" (LK 23:52-55).

We can always count on John to bring extra material in his Gospel. "After that, Pilate was approached by Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple of Jesus, but a secret disciple for fear of Jews, who asked to be allowed to remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave the permission; so Joseph came and took the body away. He was joined by Nicodemus (the man who had first visited Jesus by night), who brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, more than half a hundred weight. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen cloth according to the Jewish burial-customs. Now at the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, not yet used for burial there, because the tomb was near at hand, and it was the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, they laid Jesus" (JN. 19:38-42).

Leaving aside the character of Joseph of Arimathaea, we need to note that:

- 1) Pilate himself was surprised when told that Jesus was already dead.
- 2) the Synoptic Gospels mention only Joseph but John brings in Nicodemus as well alongwith his half a hundred weight of a mixture of myrrh and aloe.
- 3) The two of them wrapped Jesus' body in strips of linen cloth, according to Jewish burial-custom. Joseph wraps Jesus' body in a new/clean sheet of linen and not strips according to Mark, Matthew and Luke.
- 4) Joseph does not (Nicodemus too, even if he was there) give the ceremonial bath to the assumedly dead body before wrapping. Being a good Jew burying a pious Jew without giving the ceremonial bath would be unthinkable.
- 5) The tomb is nearby and freshly hewn; it was in a garden.
- 6) Mark and Matthew mention only two Marys but Luke says, "the women who had accompanied him from Galilee" who watched the burial. John mentions no witnesses.
- 7) Nicodemus applies half a hundred weight of spices to the body.
Apparantly this would be to heal the body of any injury.
- 8) The tomb was not small. Actually it was large enough so that even when two or three women went in, there was room enough for the "youth" according to mark or even "two men", according to Luke, with all of them standing inside the tomb. (See Chapter IX).
- 9) The tomb was new. No one had been laid in it before. Jesus could safely lay there until rescued later.
- 10) Jesus was not buried in the usual sense. The tomb was not sealed. Joseph just rolled a large stone against the entrance. This also implies that having been hewn in the rock it was like a cave.

Matthew has an important piece of information which no other Gospel gives us: "Next day, the morning after that Friday, the chief priests and the Pharisees came in a body to Pilate. Your Excellency, they said, we recall how that imposter said while he was still alive, 'I am to be raised again after three days'. So will you give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day? Otherwise his disciples may come, steal the body, and then tell the people that he has been raised from the dead; and the final deception will be worse than the first'. 'You may have your guard', said Pilate; 'go and make it secure as best you can'. So they went and made the grave secure; they sealed the stone, and left the guard in charge"(MT 27:62-66).

This probably never happened and Matthew may be meeting the objections raised later by the Jews that the disciples must have stolen the body. He, himself being of Jewish background, must have been aware that what he cleverly puts as "next day", the morning after that Friday" was SATURDAY, the day of Sabbath, or rather a very important Sabbath day, the Passover Saturday. "Chief Priests and Pharisees" would have much to do in terms of religious rites than to bother about someone whom they had made sure, as much as they could do, was already dead and buried. They, who would object to even healing the sick on a Sabbath day, would have no time first to gather together for consultation and then go to the Roman Governor's house, stay outside for fear of defilement and send a message to Pilate to seek a guard. They had their own Temple police but they still went to ask for a Roman guard. Even Jesus' own disciples and well-wishers would not go to his tomb on that day as Luke confirms: 'On the Sabbath they rested in obedience to the commandment'(LK 24:56). Matthew's later account also does not support this story as we shall see later!

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING BODY

THE EMPTY TOMB

"The women who had accompanied him from Galilee followed, they took note of the tomb and observed how the body was laid. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes; and on the Sabbath they rested in obedience of the commandment"(LK 23:55-56).

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought aromatic oils intending to go and anoint him' and very early on Sunday morning, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb"(MK 16:1-2). Some of the most ancient versions merely state: "And they went and bought aromatic oils" omitting the names. This would then be in continuation of the previous verse(MK 15:47): "And Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching and saw where he was laid". As such we are uncertain about the very names of those women who came to the tomb. We are not told if they included the "woman" who had brought a pound of perfume at the feast and for whom Jesus had said "Let her keep it till the day when she prepares for my burial"(JN 12:7).

"They were wondering among themselves who would roll away the stone for them from the entrance to the tomb, when they looked up and saw that the stone, huge as it was, had been rolled back already"(MK 16:3-4). Luke also says that they found the stone already rolled away(LK 24:2). He talks of "Women who had accompanied him from Galilee". According to John(20:1-2) while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance.

But Matthew has a different story to tell: "...it was about daybreak on Sunday, when Mary of Magdala and the other Mary came to look at the grave. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake; an angel of the Lord descended from heaven; he came to the stone and rolled it away, and sat himself upon it. His face shone like lightning; his garments were white as snow. At the sight of him the guards shook with fear and lay like dead"(MT 28:1-4).

Obviously Matthew had to extricate himself from the complication he had put himself by posting the guards. Later he deals with them in a manner as to rebut the Jewish argument that the disciples took away the body. Strangely, while the brave guards who had been posted there "shook with fear and lay like dead", the angel talks with the women who were apparently in full senses: you, he said, have nothing to fear. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised again, as he said he would be. Come and see the place where he was laid and then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has been raised from the dead and is going on before you into Galilee; there you will see him'. That is what I had to tell you"(MT 28:5-7). Actually the women did not come "looking for Jesus" rather they came to look at the grave according to Matthew himself. According to Mark who did not have the guards posted at the tomb: "They went into the tomb, where they saw a youth sitting on the right hand side, wearing a white robe; and they were dumbfounded. But he said to them, 'Fear nothing; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised again; he is not here; look, there is the place where they laid him. But go and give this message to his disciples and Peter: 'He is going before you into Galilee' Then they went out and ran away from the tomb, besides themselves with terror. They said nothing to anybody for they were afraid"(MK 16:5-8). According to some of the most ancient manuscripts this is where the

"Gospel According to Mark" ends — the remaining part is an obvious addition by a later copyist.

Some manuscripts add: "And they delivered these instructions briefly to Peter and his companions. Afterwards Jesus himself sent out by them from East to West the sacred and imperishable message of eternal salvation". But many versions do not include this.

IESUS "RAISED"

In the above versions no one saw the "raised" Jesus. According to the Gnostic Gospels this is how it should be for the Gnostics ridiculed the idea of literal resurrection. According to the Gospel of Peter (Nag Hamadi Manuscript): "Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error....they must receive the resurrection while they live....it is not necessary to rise in this flesh". This is in consonance with the "born again" concept of Jesus himself.

The above ending was, however, not acceptable to Paul's followers. So some unknown hand added verses 9 to 20 at the end of Chapter 16: "When he had risen from the dead early on Sunday morning he appeared first to Mary of Magdala, from whom he had formerly cast out seven devils. She went and carried the news to his mourning and sorrowful followers, but when they were told that he was alive and that she had seen him they did not believe it" (MK 16:9-11). If we did not know that this was a later addition we could say that Mark was contradicting himself because he himself had not stated that Mary of Magdala had seen the raised Jesus. But the cat is let out of the bag by saying that "they did not believe it".

"Later he appeared in a different guise to two of them as they were walking, on their way into the country. These also went and took the news to the others, but again no one believed them" (MK 16:12-13). These two incidences are actually borrowed from Luke although he does not say that the "two of them" were not believed.

Matthew writing later than Mark, by which time the myth of the "raised Jesus" had taken roots, tells us that the women hurried away from the tomb in awe and great joy, and ran to tell the disciples. It is rather odd that these women accepted the version of a stranger, albeit an "angel", as if it was quite normal for someone to be raised from the dead. They seem to have accepted it without doubt as something quite possible and acceptable. Suddenly Jesus was there in their path. He gave them his greetings and they came up and clasped his feet, falling prostrate before him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and take word to my brothers that they are to leave for Galilee. They will see me there (MT 28:8-10). The disciples made their way to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to meet him. When they saw him, they fell prostrate before him, though some were doubtful. Jesus then came up and spoke to them. He said: Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And he assured, I am with you always, to the end of time" (MT 28:16-20). This is where Matthew's Gospel ends. But it makes one thing clear that the command to go forth to "all nations" was given only by "raised Jesus". All this smacks of later development of the myth. Historically, the disciples to whom the command to "go forth to all nations" was given kept preaching only to the Jews. It is Paul who proclaimed himself as Apostle to the Gentiles and started preaching differently from others. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" is indeed a post-Pauline interpolation.

Now we shall revert to the story of the guards we had left out incomplete: "The women had started on their way when some of the guard went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. After meeting with the elders and conferring together,

the chief priests offered the soldiers a substantial bribe and told them to say, His disciples came by night and stole the body while we were asleep. They added, If this should reach the Governor's ears, we will put matters right with him and see that you do not suffer. So they took the money and did as they were told. This story became widely known, and is current in Jewish circles to this day"(MT 28:11-15). Matthew thus gets himself out of the difficult situation in which he had put himself, but not quite! One does not have to be a Sherlock Holmes to see obvious flaws in the story: if the guards said that they were asleep how could they say who had stolen the body? Will any soldier in the Roman army ever admit to having slept on guard duty? They would not dare do that for fear of being killed for the offence. Even Herod killed the guard when Peter slipped out while under their charge(Acts 12:19). Anyway why did they go to the High Priests and not to their own commanders? And if they were Jewish soldiers then there was to be no fear of the Pilate knowing it.

Luke brings in not one but two angels: "they went inside; but the body was not to be found. While they stood utterly at a loss, all of a sudden two men in dazzling garments were at their side. They were terrified, and stood with eyes cast down, but the men said, why search among the dead for one who lives? (According to some versions: He is not here; he has been raised). Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, about the Son of Man; how he must be given up into the power of sinful men and be crucified and must rise again on the third day; then they recalled his words and, returning from the tomb, they reported all this to the eleven and all the others(LK 24:2-9). Luke finally lifts the curtain from the names of women who saw all this:The women were Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and they, with the other women, told the apostles. But the story appeared to them to be nonsense, and they would not believe them'(LK 24:10-11). It is worth noting that the apostles did not believe the story even after the angels had reminded the women of what Jesus himself had told them earlier. This in itself raises doubts whether Jesus had indeed prophesied about his being raised after three days or if this too was a later thought. In all this episode, Mary the mother of Jesus seems to be conspicuously absent.

There are doubtful entries in various versions. The "mother of James" is variously stated to be "wife of James/daughter of James". Some versions consider that verse 12 in KJV is not authentic and omit it or place it in parenthesis being of doubtful nature. It reads thus:Then rose Peter, and ran into the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. We are kept wondering why Peter, or even the women, did not pick up the holy shroud but rather left it in the sepulchre. In any case mere presence of the shroud does not prove that Jesus had been "raised".

John knows how to make a drama out of a simple story. He brings Mary of Magdala to the tomb alone! 'She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance' yet she did not go in but ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple 'the one whom Jesus loved'. 'They have taken the Lord out of his tomb', she cried, 'and we do not know where they have laid him'. So Peter and the other disciple made their way to the tomb. That other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He peered in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but did not enter. Then Simon Peter came up, and he went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying, and the napkin which had been over his head, not lying with the wrappings but rolled together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple went in too, and saw and believed; until then they had not understood the scriptures, which showed that he must rise from the dead"(JN 20:1-9).

JESUS SIGHTED

It would be very unlikely that John should stop there. "So the disciples went home again; but Mary stood at the tomb outside, weeping. As she wept she peered into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They said to her, Why are you weeping? She answered, They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid him. With these words she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, Why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking it was the gardener, she said, If it is you, Sir, who removed him, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said, Mary? She turned to him and said, 'Rabbani' (which is Hebrew for 'My Master'). Jesus said, Do not cling to me (some versions: Touch me no more), for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers, and tell them that I am now ascending to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.(JN 20:10-17). Interestingly she does not protest about the removal of the dead body from the tomb. She does not say 'where have you taken his body', but talks of him as a living person. She wants to take him away and not "I want to bury him properly". When he discloses himself to her she is not surprised (did she know he had not died?) but wants to cling to him.

Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with her news: I have seen the Lord! She said, and gave them his message(JN 20:18). It is important to note that Luke brings in two men in dazzling garments. In the Gospel of Mark it is a 'youth' who tells her that "He has been raised again", while according to Matthew "an angel of Lord" descended from heaven to tell her that. Both the Gospels of Mark and Matthew say that she was told that Jesus will see the disciples in Galilee as the previously planned rendezvous. Matthew even tells us that the disciples made their way to Galilee and "saw" him there. John also confirms the meeting at the pre-planned rendezvous at the sea of Tiberias(JN 21:1). Yet when this news was brought to the disciples, the story appeared to be non-sense to them and they would not believe it!

ON ROAD TO EMMAUS

"The same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about a sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem [A sabbath day's journey: a short day's journey. On a sabbath Jews would travel only while sun was up. Some consider it to be only a 1000 yards from one's home. According to NEB Emmaus was about seven miles from Jerusalem. Apparently Luke the Gentile did not realise this.], and they were talking together about all these happenings. As they talked and discussed it with one another, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but something kept them from seeing who it was. He asked them, What is it you are debating as you walk? They halted, their faces full of gloom, and one, called Cleopas answered, Are you the only person staying in Jerusalem not to know what has happened there in the last few days? What do you mean? he said, All this about Jesus of Nazareth, they replied, a prophet powerful in speech and action before God and the whole people; how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and crucified him. But we had been hoping that he was the man to liberate Israel. What is more, this is the third day since it happened, and now some women of our company have astounded us; they went early to the tomb, but failed to find his body, and returned with a story that they had seen a vision of angels who told them he was alive. So some of our people went to the tomb and found things just as the women had said, but him they did not see"(LK 24:13-24).

It is noteworthy how the story is developing. If we set aside the later addition to Mark's Gospel, which is Mark 16:9-20, we see that the story ends after some people have noted

that the body was missing. From now on the myth starts building up as always happens. Both Mark and Matthew were writing for early Christians. Jesus telling (by himself or through the 'youth') the women that he is going to Galilee and according to Matthew and John there he meets his disciples. More and more stories are then added. Scripture writings are dug out to match some part of the event. Every event is authenticated through some scriptural verse which is given the air of "prophecy".

"How dull you are!, he answered, How slow to believe all that the prophets said! Was the Messiah not bound to suffer thus before entering upon his glory?" Then he began with Moses and all the prophets, and explained to them the passage which referred to himself in every part of the scriptures. By this time they had reached the village to which they were going and he made as if to continue his journey, but they pressed him: stay with us, for evening draws on, and the day is almost over. So he went in to stay with them. And when he sat down with them at table, he took bread and said the blessing; he broke the bread, and offered it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to another: Did we not feel our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" (LK 24:28-2). Could this really be Jesus who would now be on way to Galilee as conveyed by him? Before we proceed further we may like to note that the angel told the women that "he was alive", in flesh. These two disciples are talking to their dear one with whom they have been roaming all over Judaea and Galilee, yet they do not recognize even when he gives a long discourse. It is only after Jesus "broke the bread" that they become aware of his presence. Yet even though he was all flesh, as is often emphasized by Christian dogmatists, as soon as he is recognized he vanishes in thin air. He could slip away quietly, but being in the flesh he could not have "vanished". Was this a ruse to avoid him being pursued? Well, if he could vanish from behind the stone of the tomb, he could do the same thing elsewhere!

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

"Without a moment's delay they set out and returned to Jerusalem. There they found that the Eleven and the rest of the company had assembled, and were saying, 'It is true; the Lord has risen; he has appeared to Simon' (Luke 24:33-34). This is strange because Luke does not tell us who had told them that Simon Peter had met the risen Jesus. At least he himself does not report such a meeting. "Then they (the two returning from Emmaus) gave their account of the events of their journey and told how he had been recognized by them at the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about all this, there he was, standing among them. (Some versions add: 'and said to them 'Peace be with you'). Startled and terrified, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so perturbed? Why do questionings arise in your minds? Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; no ghost has flesh and bones as you can see that I have' (LK 24:35-39). In some versions verse 40 is omitted. It reads: 'After saying this he showed them his hands and feet'. It seems odd that having already been told that Jesus was alive/had risen they would be "startled and terrified" particularly Peter who is supposed to have already seen him (or did he?).

John tells us that the disciples were sitting behind locked doors, for fear of the Jews. Jesus showed them his "hands and his side". So when the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy (JN 20:19-20). But Luke insists that even after seeing his hands and feet 'they were still unconvinced, still wondering, for it seemed too good to be true. So he asked them, 'Have you anything to eat?' They offered him a piece of fish they had cooked, which he took and ate before their eyes' (LK 24:41-43). "And he said to them, This is what I meant by saying,

while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and Psalms was bound to be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. This, he said, is what is written, that the Messiah is to suffer death and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that in his name repentance bringing the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations. Begin from Jerusalem; it is you who are to witness it all. And mark this. I am sending upon you my Father's promised gift; so stay here in this city until you are armed with the power from above"(LK 24:44-49).

The message which Jesus gives to his disciples, according to John is simple. 'As the Father sent me, so I send you'. Then he breathed on them, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive any man's sins, they stand forgiven; if you pronounce them unforgiven, unforgiven they remain'(JN 20:21-23).

By now we see Paul's influence both on John as well as Luke who are writing for the Gentiles. Paul had been vying with the Jerusalem Church which had remained Jewish. In the above passage it is worth noting that according to John the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples at this meeting. 'Receive the Holy Spirit', said Jesus to them. However, according to Luke, writing his next book of "Acts of the Apostles" the Holy Spirit was yet to be given to them: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you"(Acts 1:8). It is at the time of Pentecost that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"(Acts 2:4).

Each writer tries to outclass others by adding new twists in the story and by increasing the number of people who actually saw Jesus after being "raised from the dead". If the vision was to be confined to Mary of Magdala, the lady from whom seven devils had been cast out by Jesus, then no one would have believed, her, true or not — even the disciples had considered it a nonsense! If the vision was to be confined to the 'Eleven' — or the Twelve as Paul puts it — even then people would have accused them of concoction. So Paul adds his own version: "Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, then he was raised to life on the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred of our brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James and afterwards the Apostles. In the end he appeared even to me..."(1 Cor : 3-10). Since the "Eleven/Twelve" had already seen the raised Jesus, we are confused as to which "Apostles" was Paul talking about. Or was he showing his own ignorance? His "Cephas and the Twelve" is obviously a case of forgetfulness because there were only Ten left besides Peter. Significantly Paul ignores the vision by Mary Magdala. Virgin Mary is also left out of all this.

What Paul refers to is HOSEA(6:2) "After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight". This passage refers to the revival of Israel as a nation not for a single individual or even the "Messiah" that was to come! This letter of Paul was written even earlier than the Gospels and has influenced those writers. James is quoted in order to give authority to his statement as James was the head of the Jewish-Christian Church in Jerusalem while Paul was proselytizing the Gentiles elsewhere. Even the period of his stay on earth before disappearing again (or ascension) is lengthened by Luke(Acts 1:3) "Over forty days he appeared to them". Strangely enough, Jesus was around for forty days and was seen even by his disciples in a very secretive manner. He did not stay with anyone, not did they question him of his abode nor we are told anything of where he lived or how he fed himself during these days. If he had risen in the flesh, then he must have had human needs. How did he fulfill these?

THE DOUBTING THOMAS

John, of course, is master of drama and must show us more than one appearances of Jesus: "One of the Twelve, Thomas, that is 'the Twin', was not with the rest when Jesus came. So the disciples told him, we have seen the Lord. He said, Unless I see the mark of the nails on his hands, unless I put my finger into the place where the nails are, and my hands into his side I will not believe it (JN 20:24-25). According to this story Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not there when Jesus appeared which according to Luke was "the Eleven and the rest of the company" (LK 24:23). Now unless Judas Iscariot was one of the Twelve at that time, we had all the Eleven already there, including the doubting Thomas who is said to be not present at the first sighting. So either Luke was inspired by God to miscount or John is fabricating in order to dramatise!

John now takes us through a series of appearances by Jesus. It seems that once again Jesus was playing hide and seek with his disciples as he had done with his brothers telling them to go to Jerusalem pretending that he was not going there and then secretly going there himself (JN 21). He told, or had it told, to Mary of Magdala to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee as he was going there and will meet them there. Yet he goes and meets some of them on way to Emmaus then returns separately from the two of them and meets them at the secret meeting place behind closed doors. Then he lingers around. In John's Gospel he tells Mary of Magdala I am now ascending to my Father" yet again he does not go.

A week later his disciples were again in the room, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them saying, peace be with you! Then he said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here; see my hands. Reach your finger here and put it in my side. Be unbelieving no longer, but believe. Thomas said, My Lord and My God!'. Jesus said, 'Because you have seen me you have found faith. Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith (JN 20:26-29). [The last sentence is too premature a statement as people had yet to find faith in the risen Christ!].

"There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess life by his name" (JN 20:30-31). One would think that this is the end of John's Gospel. But then we find a whole chapter after this along with similar concluding remarks. By the time John was writing his own Gospel the so-called first Gospel, that of Matthew, had already been written. John may have found that he had stated that Jesus did after all go to Galilee. Not being the one to allow a good opportunity pass by, he puts in some more details which he found that he had omitted, e.g. visit to Galilee, Jesus' eating of fish, etc. Or perhaps an unknown hand later added the last chapter to fill in the missing details. In the absence of any authentic version we can only guess.

APPEARANCE IN GALILEE

"Sometimes later Jesus showed himself to his disciples once again, by the Sea of Tiberias; and in this way. Simon Peter and Thomas, 'the Twin', were together with Nathanael of Cana-in-Galilee. The sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were also there. Simon Peter said, 'I am going out fishing'. We will go with you, said the others. So they started and got into the boat. But that night they caught nothing. Morning came, and there stood Jesus on the beach, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. He called out to them, Friends, have you caught anything? They answered, No. He said, Shoot the net to starboard and you will make a catch. They did so, and found they could not haul the net aboard, there were so many fish in it" (JN

21:1-6). This is interpreted as Jesus' instruction to them to leave the Jews and carry the message to the Gentiles where they will have much success. "Then the disciples whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord! When Simon Peter heard that, he wrapped his coat about him (for he had stripped) and plunged into the sea. The rest of them came in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards (JN. 21:7-8). It is strange that when Jesus called 'Friends' from not far away on the beach the disciples would not recognize him even though by now they had already seen and believed that he was alive and that he had said that he will see them in Galilee. It is much later that they could recognize him. Furthermore, if he did command them to fish for the Gentiles then these disciples, the "Pillars of Society" as Paul taunts them (Gal 2:9), ignored this command and continued preaching to the Jews only! It is also strange why only a few of the Apostles went to Galilee. Where were the others?

"When they came ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish laid on it, and some bread. Jesus said, Bring some of your catch. Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to land, full of big fish, a hundred and fifty three of them; and yet, many as they were, the net was not torn. Jesus said, Come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared to ask, who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus now came up, took the bread, and gave it to them, and the fish in the same way. This makes the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead (JN 21:9-14). Thus John shows one-up-manship on Luke's story of Jesus feeling hungry and disciples giving him fish which he ate. John lays down the fish on the charcoal which Jesus himself gives to his disciples and bread in addition. It is surprising that the net full of fish was so heavy that all the disciples "could not haul the net aboard" yet now Simon Peter alone could drag the net to land. This is John's way of writing!

It is intriguing that while both Matthew and John bring Jesus to Galilee, Luke, writing in the Acts (1:4) states that, while he was in their company he told them not to leave Jerusalem. You must wait, he said, for the promise made by my Father, about which you have heard me speak. John, as you know baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and within the next few days" (Acts 1:4-5). In Luke's Gospel (24:49) we had indeed been told the same thing. Thus according to Luke the disciples did not go to Galilee but stayed in Jerusalem and it is here that at the day of the Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Anyway, now that Jesus and his disciples had been brought to the Sea of Tiberias, in Galilee, John records some of the conversation, where Jesus tells Peter that if he loves him he must "feed my lambs", "tend my sheep", "feed my sheep" and prophecies the manner of death by which Peter was to glorify God. Then he told him, 'Follow me'. It may be pointed out here that Peter was crucified in 64 A.D. and the Gospel of John was completed in 100 AD. Thus once again John makes the story look like a prophecy. Then Peter, for some reason best known to himself, points to the "disciple whom Jesus loved" and asks, Lord, what will happen to him? Jesus said, If it should be my will that he wait until I come, what is it to you? Follow me. That saying of Jesus became current in the brotherhood, and was taken to mean that disciple would not die. But in fact Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, If it should be my will that he wait until I come, what is it to you? (JN 21:21-23). There is again a closing remark: There is much else that Jesus did. If it were all to be recorded in detail, I suppose the whole world could not hold the books that would be written (JN 21:25). John the master of exaggeration is once again trying to over-awe his readers.

John, or whoever wrote the fourth Gospel in John's name, is nervous if people will accept his version. So a number of times he refers to himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved',

he records his own presence at the time of Jesus' arrest, is said to have connection with the High Priest, etc., and is even prophesied by Jesus that he will be there until his second coming. He asserts the truth of all that he recorded, having been witnessed by the disciples, and now, with seemingly authoritatively reaffirms that 'It is the same disciple who attests what has been written. It is in fact he who wrote it, and we know that his testimony is true' (JN 21:24). If he were a woman we could say "Lady! your slip is showing!" It is sometimes suggested that John's Gospel was actually written by some Greek-knowing person who wrote this Gospel based on John's memories, the identity of John being once again a matter of speculation. This could be so and it then becomes understandable why he lays emphasis on the importance of the so-called the "beloved disciple" and we wonder if he was really so "beloved" of Jesus then why Jesus or the Eleven had not nominated him the twelfth against the slot vacated by Judas Iscariot. [Also see chapter XIII].

It is significant that when the supposedly "raised" Jesus appears, he is not recognised. Mary Magdalene does not recognise him. On the road to Emmaus, "the Two" do not recognise not only his voice but him until he broke the bread. One of these Two is Cleopas who was his uncle, the husband of the sister of Virgin Mary. The disciples who went to Galilee and expecting to meet Jesus, do not at first recognise Jesus but just suspect that it was him. Even when they are near him "none of the disciples durst ask him, who art thou?" (JN 21:12). Could this be really Jesus, or did these "witnesses" only "thought" that they had seen Jesus? Why did the rest of the disciples not come to meet him in Galilee?

When Jesus appeared to his disciples behind closed doors (JN 20:19) in spite of telling Mary Magdalene that he was "ascending to my Father" (JN 20:17), the disciples recognised him only after he had shown them his hands and his side (JN 20:20). Why did he have to do this to be recognised? Could it be that to them and later to the doubting Thomas, he was trying to convince that he was alive since he had NOT been crucified? He showed his unpierced hands and feet to prove that. This gives yet another twist to the episode!

According to Matthew Jesus made only one appearance and that too in Galilee. John records only three appearances, one in the evening of "resurrection" to all the disciples except Thomas, the second to the disciples including the doubting Thomas, and the third in Galilee to Peter and others. Luke tells us that he first appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus on the day of "resurrection", then that very evening to the Eleven and the rest of the company including the two who had returned from Emmaus, and then led them to Bethany from where he "ascended". Paul tops them all: "He appeared to Cephas and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred of brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. then he appeared to James and afterwards to all the apostles. In the end he appeared even to me" (1 Cor 15:5-8). Paul was obviously exaggerating and in his enthusiasm he counts Peter twice in "Cephas and afterwards the Twelve" and then again the apostles who were none other than the Twelve, which should incidentally be "the Eleven" since Judas Iscariot was no more among them. the claim of seen by five hundred at once is so tall that none of the four Gospels, which were written much later than 1 Corinthians, care to include this fantastic phenomenon. Paul seemingly considered "the women" too untrustworthy to be acknowledged as witnesses.

ASCENSION AND RETURN

Luke is the only Gospel writer who tells us that Jesus was "taken up" and that he "will come" in the same way you have seen him go" (Acts 1:9-11). In his own Gospel Luke tells: "and in the act of blessing he parted from them" (LK 24:51) which could mean that he left them on way

to an unknown destination. Some versions, which are generally not accepted as authentic, add: 'and was carried up in heaven'. In none of the other three Gospels do we learn of this in specific terms. The reference in Mark is an obvious later interpolation by an unknown hand. the RSV (1952) omits it from the main text and choses to place it in the footnotes. Even the Catholic Jerusalem Bible admits that "this ending to the gospel may not have been written by Mark, though it is old enough".

According to the interpolation in Mark Jesus had appeared to "the ELEVEN" in that (upper) room in Jerusalem and "after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God"(MK 16:19). This must have happened early on Easter Monday, the day after "resurrection". Jesus had first appeared to 'the two' at Emmaus, "which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs"(LK 24:13), then disappeared. This must have been Sunday evening. After "the two" returned to Jerusalem where Jesus, by walking back or through some divine assistance, also returned and met his disciples. On the other hand Luke tells us that Jesus had "showed himself alive after his passion...being seen of them forty days"(Acts 1:3). The last time he met his disciples was at "the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem as Sabbath day's journey"(Acts 1:12). One of the two accounts is obviously wrong. Leaving out the interpolated part, both Mark and Matthew writing for early Christians say nothing about ascension, which is significant. Luke, the companion of Paul, specifically talks about it since he was writing for the Gentiles.

John writing much later only suggests ascension when Jesus talks to Mary Magdalene after "resurrection": "I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"(JN 20:17). Those who proclaim special relationship between God, the Father, and Jesus, "The Son of God", must concede a similar relationship of "The Daughter of God" to Mary Magdalene on the basis of this verse. However, Jesus does not ascend to heaven or wherever it be to sit on the right hand of God but instead goes to the shores of the sea of Tiberias. And if he did go to heaven, he may well have done that from there unless he was again roaming around with his disciples following him all over Galilee and Judaea and back to Jerusalem or Olivet or from wherever he was to ascend.

In fact "Ascension" was a phenomenon well-known to many civilizations. It represented "the Soul or lower Self, having been perfected on the lower planes and raised to the higher, becomes merged in the Higher Self seated in the Causal body on the higher mental plane". In the Egyptian mythology "The end of the Taut is represented by a semi-circular wall or border formed of earth. At the middle point of this border in the disk of the sun which is about to rise, and joined to it is the head of the 'image of Shu' with his arms stretched out along the rounded border of Taut. Above his head is the beetle, symbol of Kheper, who has emerged from the boat of the Sun-god; and below is the 'Image of AF' that is to say, the body of the night Sun-god, which has been cast away". ... "This symbolical picture exactly describes the ascension of 'Horus into Osiris' or 'Jesus into Christ' ... The image therefore lies as a corpse at the end of the cycle; but it is depicted as embalmed and has a large cross [X] marked upon it. This means that the personality has been perfected at the crucifixion and therefore dies to be re-born spiritually (as Horus) in the new life". Zoroaster, Plato says, rose again to life in twelve days. He alludes perchance to the resurrection, or perchance to the fact that the path for souls to ascension lies through the twelve signs of Zodiac" ... "The Soul(Zoroaster) descends to the lower planes for experience and purification (funeral pyre), afterwards it ascends in the resurrection, and is liberated from the lower nature"(G.S. Gaskell: Dictionary of Scripture and Myth, pp. 70-71, 841).

The concept of 'ascension' was nothing new for the people of the biblical times. Angels go back and forth, people are snatched out of sight, demons talk and go into animals, saints come out of the graves, Elijah goes to heaven and alongwith Moses appears to Jesus and Peter, etc. Paul testifies: "I know a Christian man who fourteen years ago (whether in body or out of it, I do not know — only God knows) was caught up as far as the third heaven. And I know that this same man (whether in body or out of it, I do not know — God knows) was caught up into paradise, and heard words so secret that human lips may not repeat them(1 Cor 12:2-4). Ascension, as such, was quite common place and according to the genius of those times. It was a normal happening and no extraordinary significance needs to be attached to it. Since everyone goes up, why should Jesus stay behind?

What goes up must come down! There is, however, another reason why must there be a second coming for Jesus: "...flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God and the perishable cannot possess immortality"(1 Cor 15:50). Jesus must return to this earth to shed his body of flesh.

Paul seems to be convinced that the time of the second coming is not to be long delayed, it is imminent, it is 'at hand', in our life time hurry up and be converted, or you may miss the bus:" ...at the sound of the archangel's voice and God's trumpet-call, the Lord himself will descend from heaven; first the Christian dead will rise, then we who are left alive shall join them, caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air'(1 Thess 4:16-17). This is as in NEB. According to KJV: '...Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God...'. RBV puts it, '...with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, the Lord himself will descend from heaven...'. According to NWT: Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet...'. NIV has it: ... the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. Thus while a number of translations tell us that Jesus will come with a loud shout, NEB makes us to understand that there will be a fanfare preceding Jesus — nothing about his shout!. In 11 Thessalonians(1:7-8) Paul says that 'when our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in blazing fire. Yet in Acts(1:11) we had been told that Jesus "will come in the same way as you have seen him go", which is "a cloud removed him from their sight". Jesus testifying before the High Priest is also supposed to have stated that the Son of Man will be coming on a 'cloud of heaven'(MK 14:). This seems to have been borrowed from Daniel(7:13): "Behold, one like Son of man came with the clouds of heaven". So Christ should return softly as a cloud and not with the shout of archangel accompanied by blazing fire. Nothing to do with Paul's much-ado, when and if Jesus returns.

Did Jesus say he will come back? The addendum to Mark's Gospel tell us that after having been taken up into heaven 'he took his seat at the right hand of God'(MK 16:19). Matthew records that Jesus assured 'I am with you always, to the end of time'(MT 28:20). Taking a cue from Paul, Matthew also records: "For as the lightening cometh out of the east, so shall also the coming of the son of man be"(MT 24:27); they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet.(MT 24:30,31). Luke(21:25-34) also records similar occurrences which in fact was past history. The tribulations had already taken place and the Romans had destroyed the Temple when these were being written. Another reference in Luke regarding any future contact after death is in the speech at the Last Supper: For I tell you, never again shall I eat it until the time when it finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God'(LK 22:15-16). This is clearly not related to the second coming. However, in John's Gospel Jesus clearly states that the Holy Spirit(Ghost) will take his place: If I do not go your Advocate/Comforter will not come(JN 16:7). There are,

however, two references, both in John's Gospel, which could mean his return: A little while, and you see me no more; again a little while and you will see me (JN 16:16); If it should be my will that he wait until I come, what is it to you? (JN 21:22). These are the words ascribed to Jesus by the Gospel writer whose own identity is at best doubtful.

THE GREAT LET-DOWN

Did Jesus really mean that he will be out of sight for some time and meet them later? If Jesus was to come then it should have been soon – within John's life time. Indeed Jesus had told his disciples: "Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (MT 9:1). If Matthew correctly quotes Jesus, then all the tribulations and subsequent coming of the Son of man should have been accomplished before "this generation shall not pass" (MT 24:34). Even James (or whosoever wrote under that name) is convinced that these were the "last days" (Jas 5:3) and that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas 5:8). In his First Letter John says "this is indeed the last hour" (I Jn 2:8). Paul cautioned: "Art thou bound unto a wife? week not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife ... But this I say brethren, the time is short" (I Cor 7:27, 29). "The day of Christ is at hand" (II Thess 2:2). John further identified the time: "Even now there are many antichrist whereby we know that it is the last time" (I Jn 2:18). Peter(?) is also stated to have said: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (II Pet 3:10). In his Book of Revelation John records that 'the hour of fulfillment is nearer' (22:10). Jesus was to come soon and Jesus reassures "Yes, I am coming soon" (22:20). As the time passed, people's hopes were not fulfilled. Even Paul had to qualify his stand: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (II Thess 2:3). John kept saying "Come, Lord Jesus" (22:20) but Jesus never came and John died! The promise to John was never fulfilled. Apologies were made: "with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. It is not that Lord is slow in fulfilling his promise, as some suppose, but that he is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for all to come to repentance" (II Pet 3:8,9). Yet John died, Jesus' promise notwithstanding!

According to Deut(18:22): "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously". Did Jesus speak presumptuously or was the tale of his second coming "soon" put in by later enthusiasts? In either case the second coming becomes irrelevant.

If Jesus indeed died on the cross then by this ultimate sacrifice he atoned for the sins of the mankind. Then there was no need for his return or for the COMFORTER to come, If he did not complete the task assigned to him then the rest of his uncompleted task would be taken over by the COMFORTER. The concept of "return" would have relevance only if we contend that Jesus was leaving behind an unfulfilled task which the Comforter will have to take over. Since the Comforter will also prove to be a failure, Jesus will have to come back to try to achieve what he failed to do at his first coming. Having failed once, it is unlikely that Jesus would succeed in this wicked world in his second coming. It seems "God, the Father" will have to descend from his mighty throne to come down to earth to achieve where "God, the Son" and "God, the Holy Spirit" failed. Or else, God Almighty, the one and only, will have to send someone else to finish this unfinished task. Jesus' second coming is again not relevant for this purpose. In any case "if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they will pay no heed even if someone should rise from the dead" (LK 16:31). Second coming, thus, becomes irrelevant on all counts. No wonder "only a remnant shall be saved" (Rom 9:27, Isa 10:22).

Even though the hope of Jesus' "Imminent" return "in our own time" faded, nevertheless the promise of Christianity lay in his Second Coming. Without such a hope the Christian house of cards would fall flat. Various theories and scenarios were created to keep that hope alive. "Prompted by the Zoroastrian (MAZDEAN) cosmology and the emphasis on Psalmist's thousand-year days in II Peter (3:8) Christian theologians of the 2nd century C.E. transformed world history into a world week, and the seventh day thereof into the world-sabbath, a jubilee of sweetness, peace and earthly delight after six thousand-year days of human labor" (Hillel Schwartz: Century's End, Doubleday, New York, 1990, pp.10). Jesus must come back to fulfill his promise, but not yet for a longtime! Justin Martyr (Circa 180-165 C.E.) and Irenaeus (Circa 115-200 C.E.) continued to look for Christ to set up a literal kingdom of God on earth. Origen asserted that the Kingdom existed not in time or space but in believer's soul.

By fifth century C.E. Christianity had entrenched itself as a state religion. There was no more need to make excuses. St. Augustine (354-430 C.E.) called Revelation a spiritual allegory saying that the millenium of Jesus' rule on earth was realized in the Church. This, however, was not satisfactory to many new sects and groups that sprang up in later centuries. Countless arguments kept the hope of the faithful alive. Christian evangelists have been fanning these hopes. The expected date of Jesus' return, Paul's "son of perdition", John's beast of 666" and Antichrist, etc., have been a cause of innumerable speculations; some of the interesting ones are listed below:

- Over the centuries a very large number of persons have been labelled as Antichrist: Huns, Magyars, Mongols, Muslims/Turks, any ruler who was perceived as a tyrant, Hitler, even some Popes.
- Around 1000 C.E. many sold their belongings and trekked to Jerusalem to await Christ. They too died waiting for the "Second Coming" as did John.
- The final "time of troubles" has been associated with many plagues, civil discords, wars, famines, even deaths of prominent personalities, increase in sinfulness.
- At the time of the great plague of Europe (1348-1352 C.E.) the end of the world was predicted within ten years.
- Martin Luther (1483-1546 C.E.) believed the Church's final conflict with evil would pit it against the Turks.
- John Knox in 1547 C.E. declared that the Pope was indicated in Daniel (7:24-25) uttering blasphemy against the Most High.
- John Wycliffe, the 14th century English reformer saw in the Catholic Mass the "abomination of desolation" predicted in Daniel.
- There was great consternation when John Wesley predicted the end of the world in 1836 C.E. The Baptists professed 1830 and then 1847 C.E. to be the dates of Jesus' second coming.
- Based on Daniel(8:14) a New England farmer William Miller prophesied the end of the world in 1834 or 1844 C.E. Later the date was pinpointed to October 22, 1844. When the date passed uneventful it was declared that Christ had begun cleansing of the "heavenly sanctuary". This was the beginning of the Seventh Day Adventist movement.
- Charles Taze Russel of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society declared that Christ had indeed already returned to earth in 1847 C.E. and would begin his visible reign in 1914 C.E. Since this apparently did not happen, "the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 C.E. pass away"

is now being emphasized. [As of now it should again be "imminant" since the 1914 generation is at its fag end].

- In 1988 C.E. Edgar C. Whisenant [wise-nut?] listed "88 Reasons Why the Rupture Will Be in 1988". When the date passed the Rupture was predicted for 1989. No new date has been set as yet.

- A South Korean preacher prophesied that the end would come on October 20 or 28, 1992. In South Korea as many as 20,000 left schools and quit jobs and collected at the preacher's Church to await the end, which of course did not come.

- Over the last twenty centuries there have been innumerable fixations of date based on a number of biblical indicators. Whenever a date fails to fulfill the prophecy, evernew projections are made with no apology.

- Many Christians have seen in the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel the final sign of the gathering of the Jews in preparation for Christ's return.

- Evangelists and others keep haranguing on the theme of "Second Coming".

HOPE LIVES ON even though Jesus himself had declared that "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but my father only"(MK 13:32).

CHAPTER X

THE CROSS QUESTIONED

It is said that Christianity stands or falls on the Cross. The death of Jesus on the Cross, or a stake, whatever it may be called, and his rising from the dead forms the very basis of Christianity. No other religion is so precariously built around a single historical event. As Paul said, "If Christ was not raised, your faith has nothing in it" (1 Cor 15:15). According to German theologian Prof. Rudolf Karl Bultman: "The Cross and Resurrection are inseparable-belief in the redemptive efficacy of the Cross amounts to belief in Resurrection, whether or not the resurrection occurred as an event in history

The Gospels, which the Christians consider as the inspired Word of God, do not give us a coherent picture of what really happened on that fateful day of crucifixion of Jesus. Rather, at many places the descriptions are not only vague but rather at variance with each other. There are wide gaps of missing information. Most of what is known about the life or utterances of Jesus during his earthly sojourn was recorded many years after he left this world of flesh. It is an acceptable fact that man cannot hold in his brain the exact picture of events, or words uttered, even one year after the incidence. If events, impressions or words are recorded or reported several years after the actual occurrence then it is most likely that these may be mis-reported or inaccurately recorded. This may not be essentially through deliberate falsification or mis-representation as these are separate issues. Even with all the good intentions it is the human limitation on recall by which the sincerest of persons may not be able to relate the correct version. The words can also be mis-reported, mis-translated or mis-understood in successive relays from one reporter to another. The accuracy of recall is also subject to our own perceptions and cultural and temporal biases. Men often perceive their heroes not as they were but as they think they ought to have been. The New Testament is not free from these difficulties. There are further difficulties in that the evidence was carefully selected according to the doctrines most acceptable to church powers. Yet this is the only evidence put forward and acceptable to the faithful and we must sift through this very evidence to show its fallibility.

WAS JESUS REALLY CRUCIFIED?

The crucial first step in the process of establishing the authenticity of crucifixion is to determine if Jesus was indeed put on the Cross. The Gospels provide us only with a sketchy and blurred picture which is often at variance between different Gospels. We need to seek alternate sources, independent of the New Testament, to establish the true perspective. Some of these sources contend that on that fateful day whoever else may have been put on the Cross, it was not Jesus. Who could that be? There are several immediate candidates.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

According to the non-canonical Gospel of Barnabas, Section 215: "When the soldiers with Judas drew near to the place where Jesus was, Jesus heard the approach of many people, wherefore in fear he withdrew into the house. And the eleven were sleeping. Then God, seeing the danger of his servant, commanded Gabriel, Michael, Rafael and Uriel, his ministers, to take Jesus out of the world. The holy angels came and took Jesus out by the window that looketh toward the South. They bare him and placed him in the third heaven in the company of angels blessing God evermore". According to this Gospel, the soldiers mistook Judas Iscariot to be Jesus.

We must remember that in the Biblical times it was not uncommon for angels to come to the aid of people. We know from New Testament that angels helped Peter and some others to slip out of jail (Acts 5:19). Similarly was Philips snatched away (Acts 8:40).

According to another theory Judas may have deliberately posed himself as Jesus in order to save Jesus. It was thus not a betrayal but self-sacrifice as would be expected from a chosen disciple of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus had said "I have chosen you and ordained you" (JN 15:16). Jesus had reassured the Twelve "ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (MT 19:28). This did not exclude Judas. If Jesus really knew "who should betray him" (JN 13:11) then he would have qualified his assurance. Furthermore, if Judas through his treachery, is not to sit on the throne of judgment then at least once Jesus did not prophecy properly. Jesus may have spoken prematurely and in terms of Deuteronomy (18:22) he also spoke presumptuously. Thus, either Jesus did not promise thrones of judgment to the "TWELVE", Judas included, or Judas did not betray Jesus. In either case the Holy Spirit did not inspire the Gospel writers properly to record factually!

The two Galileans, Jesus and Judas, who were both strangers to and new comers in Jerusalem may have looked similar and be easily mistaken for each other. The strange behaviour of "Jesus" at the trials, his apparent bewilderment and incoherent replies were not typical of Jesus who was known to be a vocal person. Could it be that Judas was deliberately trying to impersonate but said little for fear of being detected? Could the person who was put on the cross be Judas Iscariot? The clue to this most well-kept secret is no more available after all the rival versions were systematically destroyed in the centuries after crucifixion and especially after 325 C.E. when the New Testament books were deliberately and consciously selected (and then edited, excised, revised) out of a large number of candidate manuscripts that were presented at the Council of Nicaea.

The canonical Gospel of Matthew reports the death of Judas by saying that he "hanged himself" in remorse (MT 27:5). However, Luke in his book of Acts (1:18) records that "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out". Matthew again differs with Acts concerning the purchase of "a field". According to him "he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple; and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, 'It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took council and bought with them the potter's field' (MT 27:5-7). Thus there are conflicting descriptions concerning Judas in the Gospel of Matthew and the book of Acts, both of which are claimed to have been inspired.

Interestingly, Matthew records that all this was to fulfill a prophecy "spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, and they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field" (MT 27:9-10). This is a mistaken reference to a description, not by Jeremiah, but by Zachariah (11:12-13) wherein he refers to a donation of thirty pieces of silver to "the treasury (potter) in the house of Lord" an interesting reflection on the infallibility of this word of God, inspired or otherwise!

After the death of Judas, according to the Gospel of Barnabas, "Those disciples who did not fear God went by night and stole the body of Judas and hid it, spreading a report that Jesus was risen again" (Section 218). This was necessary for two reasons: firstly, by declaring that Jesus had indeed died the persecutors were mislead to avoid any search for the missing Jesus, and secondly, because hearing of Jesus' death some departed from the doctrine of Jesus, believing

that Jesus had been a false prophet, and that by art magic he had done the miracles which he did; for Jesus had said that he should not die till near the end of the world" (Section 218).

JESUS BARABBAS

According to Mark(15:7) "And there was one named Ba-rab-bas which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him who committed murder in the insurrection". Matthew(27:16) calls him "a man of some notoriety"(NEB). Luke(23:19) describes him as "who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast in prison". John(18:40) tells us plainly that Barabbas was a robber(KJV), a bandit(NEB). Thus Barabbas was a notorious seditious criminal who had committed murder of a Roman official at an insurrection. On the other hand Jesus had been said to preach respect for the authority: "Pay Caesar what is due to Caesar"(MK 12:17).

Pilate was concerned with this case because it was brought unto him by the Jews themselves on two counts: sedition and blasphemy; Pilate had satisfied himself that no sedition was involved and that Jesus did not claim to be an earthly king. As a pagan himself he would be least bothered if Jesus claimed to be a Son of God or even God himself. Could Pilate send this innocent law-biding man to death in a hurry when a seditious, murderous, revolutionary terrorist had been lying in the prison waiting for a trial? Could Pilate be indeed cowed down to pass the death sentence on Jesus merely by the threat "if you let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar"(JN 19:12)? Such a person would not dare even consider releasing a revolutionary known to have murdered a Roman official. There was at that time unrest in Judaea and along its borders. The Zealots were active inciting a revolt against the Romans. King Herod had not been in good terms with Pilate and had himself not condemned Jesus. It could not be politic to condemn Jesus merely to please the chief priests and the crowd and release Barabbas, a known outlaw. In any case there is no strong evidence of there being a tradition of releasing a prisoner at the time of the Passover.

Let us consider a possible alternate: Pilate being sure of Jesus' innocence would want to release him. He declares his innocence, had him flogged to show that he had been punished for whatever crime the Jews accused him of having committed. Having failed to satisfy the priests he went straight to the crowd and offered to release Jesus as a generous act of clemency and forgiveness at the time of the Passover on their part as well. When everything else failed, he brought in the notorious criminal Barabbas, put a crown of thorns and a purple robe on him and sentenced him to crucifixion without the crowd realising who he was. The Chief Priests and pharisees were also no where near as they had not entered the courtyard for fear of defilement (JN 18:28). From a distance it may not have been possible to recognise the condemned person in gorgeous robes.

Curiously, the bandit is supposed to be named Jesus Barabbas which in the local language, Aramaic, means "the son of father". If Pilate did give a choice to the crowd then it was between "Jesus, the son of father" and "Jesus, the Son of the Father". The crowd was in no mood, as always with crowds, to ponder over subtle differences. They were interested in quick justice which Pilate then passed out. For fear of detection the sentence was quickly carried out notwithstanding the forthcoming Passover. Not many recognized Jesus anyway. Those who were acquainted with him were already hiding for their own safety. If anyone did notice the ploy then he must have kept his peace for the sake of Jesus' own safety. If the victim did indeed die on the Cross, or even if he did not, it was most important to "snatch" the body lest the truth be found out.

SIMON OF CYRENE

Although John insists that Jesus "bearing his Cross" was taken to Golgotha, the three synoptic Gospels agree that "as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, whom they compelled to bear his cross"(MT 27:32, LK 23:26). Mark even gives further details: "... who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus". The following present interesting possibilities:

1. Jesus is a little known Galilean arriving in Jerusalem along with hundreds of thousands of Jews from all over Palestine and from foreign lands to observe Passover in the Holy City.
2. In that age of no newspapers or television, his face is recognised by few, if any, in Jerusalem. His disturbance in the Temple may have caused people to run helter-skelter and few others would specifically recognise him especially since he was accompanied by a number of his disciples and others, full of dust being fresh from their long journey, all looking similar, beards and all.
3. His identity was so doubtful that even the high priests had to seek the assistance of one of his own close disciples to point him to the soldiers who had come to arrest him (MK 14:45, MT 26:49).
4. Pilate delivers Jesus to the Jews "to their will"(LK 23:25), "to be crucified"(JN 19:16). [This is doubtful because for crucifixion the victim was to be handed over to a centurion. Jews had no custom of crucifixion].
5. Jesus is then led to the site of crucifixion apparently along with the other two "bandits" (Istai/Zealots?) who are carrying their own crosses; Jesus seems to have been too weak to carry his own cross. So they made Simon to carry the cross/stake on behalf of Jesus. [Since the victims were usually nailed/tied to the cross-beam, Simon must have been tied accordingly in order also to be able to carry the beam which would otherwise be difficult to carry].
6. As the victims are led toward Golgotha, there must have been considerable commotion with the Jewish crowd jeering at Jesus while "a great crowd of people and women, which also bewailed and lamented him"(LK 23:27). Jewish soldiers accompanying them must have had hard time keeping the crowd away.
7. When the three cross-bearers arrived at Golgotha/Calvary they were taken charge of by the Roman soldiers among all that commotion. They did not know that Simon was only a cross-bearer by proxy and not the actual condemned person.
8. In the prevailing commotion the Roman soldiers put Simon on the Cross in spite of his, and of the Jewish soldiers,' violent protests, of course in their native tongue Aramaic. The Roman soldiers spoke only Greek and did not understand Aramaic.
9. No wonder the victim on the Cross said "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they are doing"(LK 23:34).
10. Jesus' disciples whisked him away. In order to hide the mistake Joseph of Arimathea took over Simon's body, quickly put it in his own sepulchre and later removed it. It now remains the best-kept secret of all times.
11. No wonder Jesus was seen by some of his disciples later on.

The only problem with this version would be the "elders" of the Jews who are said to have accompanied Jesus to Golgotha. We have repeatedly pointed out that it is most unlikely that Jews, especially their festidious elders would go anywhere near the "place of the skull". They had declined to go even unto Pilate's palace for fear of being profaned. It will be

unthinkable for a pious Jew to be anywhere near the profaned place of Golgotha as this would need a long and complicated ritual of "purification" that no one would have time for at this important and busy period of Passover/Unleavened Bread. None of them actually realised what happened.

MERE FANTASY? No more than Gospel version itself! Indeed this was the belief of the Basilidians, the Corinthians and the Corporatians which flourished in the second century C.E.

THOMAS DIDYMUS

All the four Gospels and the book of Acts mention a disciple named "Thomas", variously mentioned as Thomas Didymus or Thomas called Twin, but not much is ascribed to him of any consequence. In a passage of John's Gospel, which is probably a later interpolation, he initially queries whether Jesus had indeed been resurrected in the flesh. For this reason he is also commonly known as the Doubting Thomas.

Curiously, "Thomas" is not a name at all; it is a sobriquet, the word being simply the Hebrew for "twin". Since 'didymus' also means twin in Greek, Thomas Didymus, when properly translated into English, becomes "Twin Twin" or "the Twin called the Twin" which are absurd terms. The question then becomes relevant as to who was this Thomas or the Twin and whose twin was he.

These questions are partially answered, quite explicitly, by the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, a very early work dating probably from the end of the first century. Here, Thomas is identified as 'Judas Thomas', which translates as Judas the Twin'. In another slightly later apocryphal work, the Acts of Thomas, the issue is further clarified. Here, too, Thomas is named specifically as Judas Thomas. And when Jesus appears to a young man, who saw Lord Jesus in the likeness of the Apostle Judas Thomas the Lord said to him: 'I am not Judas who is also Thomas, I am his brother...' On the basis of the most recent evidence, there could be little doubt that Judas Thomas was indeed Jesus' brother mentioned in the Gospels as Jude.

"If Judas Thomas, or Jude the Twin, was indeed Jesus' twin brother, what would have been his status among his contemporaries? In the Acts of Thomas, there is the following quotation: 'Twin brother of Christ, apostle of the Most High and fellow initiate into the hidden word of Christ, who dost receive his secret sayings'. And again, even more explicitly, in an invocation to the Holy Ghost [which, significantly enough, is a feminine]: 'Come Holy Spirit... Holy Dove that bearest the twin young. Come, Hidden Mother'. In a fragment from another apocryphal work, Jesus approaching Simon Peter and Judas Thomas addresses them 'in the Hebrew language'. There seems to have been some obfuscation, perhaps deliberate, in the translation of the original coptic text, but what Jesus appears to say is: 'Greetings, my venerable guardian Peter. Greetings, Thomas (twin), my second Messiah...."

"To most contemporary Christians, of course, and even to most contemporary agnostics, the suggestion that Jesus had a twin brother will seem at best far-fetched, at worst blasphemous. But it is important, indeed vital, to bear one crucial fact in mind. The texts in which Judas Thomas appears as Jesus' twin were at one time widely used by Christian congregations, not only in Egypt and Syria, but also, as we shall see, as far away as Spain, and it seems, Ireland. They were accepted works of scripture, as legitimate as the canonical Gospels of the New Testament, or the Acts of the Apostles. This can only mean that, at the time, the idea of a twin was perfectly acceptable to devout Christians..." (Michael Baigent, et. al.: The Messianic Legacy).

We shall not discuss any further whether Thomas was indeed an identical twin of Jesus. However, it is commonly known and accepted that his resemblance to Jesus was remarkable and many of Jesus's close contemporaries would mistakenly mis-identify him as Jesus. In Leonardo da Vinci's master work 'The Last Supper' he is shown in almost the exact image of Jesus.

Could it be that the person on the Cross was Judas Thomas who sacrificed his life in order to save his elder brother (if not the twin brother) Jesus? It is significant that when the "resurrected Jesus first appeared to his disciples, Thomas was the only one of the remaining "ELEVEN who was missing (JN 21:24). Was he absent because he had indeed replaced Jesus at the Cross?

We must, however, recognize that in Acts(1:13) "Thomas" is present in the very first gathering of Jesus' disciples, "a group of women including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren". This happened in Jerusalem soon after Jesus was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight at the mount called Olivet(Acts 1:9,12-14). Then we hear of his name no more along with that of Mary the mother of Jesus. Although Luke, the supposed author of the book of the Acts of the Apostles keeps talking of "apostles", "disciples", "they", "twelve" he does not mention the name of Thomas. Curiously, James(the Just) headed the Mother Church at Jerusalem. He, as a brother of Jesus, seems to have replaced Thomas(Judas) after "Thomas" Jesus went in hiding(or exile) taking his mother along.*

DID JESUS DIE ON THE CROSS?

Without going into the merits of the alternate theories let us confine ourselves to the Gospel versions that Jesus was himself put on the cross. The crucial point is whether, having been put on the cross, did Jesus in fact die while on the cross or was he alive when taken off in the afternoon/evening.*

1. The Scriptural Verdict

Deut (13:1-15): "If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams says, "Let us follow other gods" that prophet or dreamer must be put to death. You must purge the evil from among you". The Jews had accused Jesus of having falsely declared himself a Messiah and thus blasphemed. It is this crime of blasphemy for which the Jews wanted to kill Jesus.

Deut(18:22): "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him".

Deut(21:22,23): "If a man guilty of a capital offence is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse"

Aware of this Paul apologises: "Christ saved us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us"(Gal.3:13). It is a pity that Paul had to go to such an extent to prove his doctrine. God in His Mercy would have found a better method of redemption of the sins of the mankind than to put his "only begotten Son" under a perpetual curse!

* According to the Holy Quran: "He was not killed, nor crucified, but a doubt was created." The respected Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes depicted Jesus as surviving the Cross by means of a fraudulent crucifixion involving a substitute. Liz Greene, has written a novel, 'The Dreamer of the Vine, based on some historical research wherein she mentions a bloodline descended from Jesus. Similar assertions have been made in 'The Holy Blood And The Holy Grail' (by Michael Baigent and others) after much historical research.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"(MT 3:1,2). If John was indeed to be the herald to the coming Messiah then the kingdom of heaven was to be inaugurated soon. Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension leaving the whole programme incomplete till second coming somehow does not seem to fit into the scheme of things.

3. The Necessity for Sacrifice

According to the Pauline doctrine Jesus offered himself as a Paschal (sacrificial) "Lamb" to atone for the sins of mankind, especially, the "original sin" of Adam and Eve in disobeying God and eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Notwithstanding the original sin, there should be no need to sacrifice a superior, sinless, blameless Messiah for inferior, sinful, guilty humanity. The rule of sacrifice requires that an INFERIOR thing should be sacrificed in order to save a SUPERIOR thing. "The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright"(Prov 21:18).

In Matthew's Gospel(9:2) Jesus tells the man with palsy "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee". No sacrifice or atonement was called for. Jesus did not even indicate that it was he who was forgiving the sins. He had been teaching: "if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (MT 19:17); "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"(MT 7:21). No sacrifice is required! To quote Psalms: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears has thou opened, burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required"(Ps 40:6).

Let alone a sacrificial offering, we do not need to excel each other in doing the will of God to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus related the parable of the equal wages for different amounts of work(MT 20:1) explaining that God would receive our deeds and give rewards in His Grace notwithstanding our own total effort. No sacrifice is mentioned.

Even if the power to forgive sins was given to Jesus(MK 2:10), he did not need to sacrifice himself. He only had to say "He who believeth in me is forgiven". After all he had already said "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"(JN 3:36). "Son of Man has the right on earth to forgive sin"(MT 9:6). This was unqualified. This was while Jesus was ALIVE. In fact he had emphasized: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"(MT 9:13,12:7). This is plucked from Hosea(6:6).

4. The Suffering Messiah

The promised Messiah, according to the Jewish prophecy and tradition was to be a King, from the branch of Jesse, in the line of King David. He was also to be a priestly one, for the Jews believed that suffering and illness were the result of sin. Jesus did say to the paralytic: "My son, your sins are forgiven"(MK 2:5). When questioned as to why had he healed the woman with the "spirit of infirmity for eighteen years"(LK 13:11) on a Sabbath day, the diagnosis given by Jesus was "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound"(LK 13:16). When Jesus, after first refusing to heal the daughter of the woman from Canaan because she was not an Israelite, did heal the daughter, he tells the woman that it was done through her faith(MT 16:28). A blind man gets healed because of his faith(MK 10:52). Devil departs after Jesus rebukes him and so a child is healed thereby. Jesus even elaborates: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting"(MK 9:24-29). So much for faith. On the other hand Jesus fails to perform many miracles because of the lack of faith of the people of his own area

(MT 14:58; MK 6:5-6). Suffering is thus the result of lack of faith. It needs no sacrifice to heal or to forgive.

The "resurrected" Jesus reminds the two on the road to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (LK 24:177). Then he explains various scripture prophecies and how these had now been fulfilled in him. This had to be written in the Gospel because the Jews had to be told that they had misunderstood the role of the Messiah. While Jesus did fulfill the role of the priestly Messiah, he is expected to fulfill the remaining part of being a King on his next visit. But why did he have to suffer? Jesus did not lack faith. Why should, he, the sinless one, suffer and go down to hell for the sins of others? In any case even the suffering Messiah was supposed to have been persecuted but triumphant in the end leading Israel to glory and not be captured and crucified leaving desolate the hope of Israel.

5. The Sanhedrin

"In the New Testament times Sanhedrin was the supreme civil and religious body within the Jewish nation. The president of the Sanhedrin was the High Priest and twenty three members composed a quorum. The Sanhedrin had the right, granted by the Romans, to pass sentence of death but not the right to execute it. Christ and later Peter, John and Stephen were tried by the Sanhedrin" (John Philips: Exploring the New Testament, An Emmaus Correspondence Course). In the case of Peter they arrested him along with other apostles but an angel helped them to slip out (Acts 5:19). However, they were again brought before the Council who had them flogged and ordered them to give up speaking in the name of Jesus and discharged them (Acts 5:40,41). Stephen was stoned to death. Later John and James the Just were executed. Even when they had arrested the Apostles for preaching "resurrection" of Jesus, the Sanhedrin "wanted to put them to death" (Acts 5:33) for this lesser crime.

In the case of Jesus we are told that against their own rule, the Sanhedrin met in the middle of the night (according to Mark, others accounts seem clear after-thoughts) took a decision against Jesus and then sent him to the Roman Governor for ANOTHER TRIAL. If Sanhedrin itself could not stone Jesus to death, (which they did in case of others) all that was needed from the Romans was to carry out the sentence. John denies that the Sanhedrin tried Jesus — only the High Priests did it according to him. If we cannot be certain about the trial can we be certain about the outcome?

6. The Jewish Verdict

The High Priest had warned the Council that "it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not" (JN 11:50). The Jews expected the Messiah to come and liberate them. If he was not to be successful, then Jesus was not the expected Messiah. They were thus accusing Jesus that he was a FALSE MESSIAH who was unnecessarily inciting trouble. It is intriguing that nowhere in the Gospels a clear verdict is given. Why is it so?

The role of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea is also not stated. They were members of the Sanhedrin yet they never tried to defend Jesus at this stage. Nicodemus had intervened at an earlier occasion "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? they answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (JN 7:51,52). Why was he not at the Trial? It seems that having realised the futility of arguing, these two resourceful members of the Sanhedrin had laid out their own plan to rescue Jesus.

7. The Passover

For the Jews the Passover is an important festival of great religious significance. A large number of pilgrims from all over the world would come to the Temple in Jerusalem. Those who did not come would observe it solemnly at their homes. Jerusalem would be filled with pilgrims. Some of the pilgrims would be indifferent or perhaps hostile to Jesus. But a large number of those who came from Galilee and had seen or heard of his miracles would be quite sympathetic to him. Once Jesus had been arrested and secured it would be prudent to keep the matter secret until after the festival when Jesus could be safely dealt with. The "chief priests and elders of the nation" were cognizant of this: "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people"(MT 26:5).

It is not understandable as to what was the rush to push through with the trial and crucifixion when the local priorities demanded peaceful and quite environment. Jewish priests had at hand many important religious preparations rather than to indulge in the midnight trial, spend the whole forenoon at the Roman Governor's palace, look after the details of crucifixion, then go back to the Governor to ask for a guard on the Passover day itself. This is too much to do for a pious Jew who would be prepared to postpone the whole affair till after the Passover when many of Jesus' sympathisers would also be gone. The sanctity of observing the Sabbath, more so of the Passover Sabbath, is indicated by the behaviour of Jesus' own disciples who waited till after the Passover to visit Jesus' tomb.

8. Herod and the Passover

In a similar circumstance in years to come, Herod (Agrippa I), after having arrested Peter with the intention to kill him (Acts, Ch.12), would decide to wait till after the Passover for carrying out the execution. Herod was the king of the realm. He could have simply ordered the beheading of Peter, as was done in the case of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas. Just prior to Peter's arrest Herod had already beheaded James, the brother of John, son of Zebedee. Why did he not do so with Peter? Obviously, because Passover was too important a festival to be messed with such earthly affairs. An execution would defile the spirit of the festival. If so for Peter, why not for Jesus? This is intriguing and some even suggest that crucifixion never took place, at least not on the indicated day, or that it was planned in such a way as to save Jesus from being killed. In other words, the faithful might say that a "divine hand" was working to ensure Jesus' safety!

9. Scourging

According to the Roman practice the condemned person was flogged precisely 72 lashes, no more no less, before he was put on the "cross". Jesus was scourged by Pilate before he was actually sentenced to be crucified (JN 19:1). This was a short exercise only to pacify the "crowd" that the "imposter" had been appropriately punished. Not the mandatory 72 lashes. Mark (15:15) and Matthew (27:26) tell us that Jesus was scourged after Pilate had sentenced him and before handing him over for crucifixion. [It is unlikely that the Roman governor would have wasted his time supervising the long flogging of a condemned victim]. Luke does not mention any scourging but does indicate that in order to pacify the crowd Pilate offered to "chastise" Jesus (LK 23:16, 22) but no actual flogging, especially not the required 72 lashes. Was this a special gesture in order to save Jesus?

In one of his T.V. lectures Minister John Hagee of San Antonio, Tx., U.S.A., stated that Jesus was actually given 39 lashes. The author of this book personally wrote to Minister Hagee

to "indicate the source of his information". The following answer was given by Pastor Jerry Hobbs, an associate of Minister John Hagee:

"Pilate did not sentence Jesus but rather the Jews. Pilate asked them who they wanted to live or die, Barrabbas or Jesus. The Jews condemned Jesus to die, not Pilate. According to the Jewish law, no Jew could receive more than 39 stripes even though they were under Roman Rule. I have also heard that in Christ's day, only 39 diseases existed. This would account for the scripture, "By his stripes we are healed".

The above reply demonstrates the confusion and the myth surrounding the whole affair. We may offer the following comments:

- i) The Jews brought Jesus to Pilate because they wanted him to be punished under the Roman Law.
- ii) Crucifixion with all its accompaniments was a Roman punishment. They would have administered 72 lashes, not 39.
- iii) The Jewish punishment of 40 stripes (NOT 39) is mentioned in Deut 25:1-3 wherein a disputed case is to be brought before "Judges" and is concerned with "controversy among men" over non-religious causes. [Whereas Deuteronomy is claimed to have been written by Moses, "Judges" were appointed many years after his death. It is, therefore, doubtful if the text actually originated with Moses]. If Jesus was indeed given 39 lashes then his crime must have been considered something even less than "controversy among men" and they should have let go of him as was Paul (see II Cor 11:24).
- iv) The stripes/lashes were actually administered by the Roman functionaries. Mark (15:15) says that Pilate "delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified". Matthew (27:26) agrees with this. Luke says that Pilate first offered to "chastise" him (23:16) as a punishment to please the Jews as he was not sure of any guilt of Jesus. No actual administration of stripes is indicated. According to John the scourging was done even before the sentence was passed (19:1), the purpose being to placate the Jews.
- v) "Thirty nine stripes healing thirty nine diseases" is high myth. Ancient Chinese and Indian medical treatises dating back before Jesus' times have remedies for many more diseases than the limited number said to be the only diseases in Jesus's time.

10. Not Foretold In the Scriptures

The need to depend on Scripture "prophecies was necessary also because of lack of eyewitnesses and for providing respectability to Gospel accounts. The very passion of Jesus was in accordance with God's will and where would you find evidence for it? The Scriptures, of course. The field was open and the evangelists had a free hand and they let go their imagination.

Gospel writers have taken great pains to assert that all that happened to Jesus was in fact "according to the Scriptures". They have dug up so-called "prophetic words" out of the Old Testament and stretched these to fit the events. In some instances it is suspected that they even concocted certain events to fit to the so-called "prophecies". However, it is note-worthy that they could not dig up any prophecy that foretold that the suffering Messiah will be actually "crucified". Crucifixion was a Roman practice that the Jews did not practice. Old Testament does speak of a kind of a posthumous exposure in the stocks in which the bodies of executed criminals were displayed on an upright pole or a gibbet but crucifixion itself is no where

mentioned. It was therefore not possible for the gospel writers to indicate crucifixion in prophecy.

11. The Good Friday

The Friday before the Passover was the day for preparation for the coming festival. The Jews were too busy to be interested in a long trial and execution. In any case if there was an emergency to carry out the execution then they could have stoned Jesus to death as they would Stephen not much later (Acts 7). Crucifixion in the Roman manner meant slow and torturous death which would necessitate taking down of the bodies early in the evening especially because of the impending Sabbath. Could it be a conspiracy by the two influentials Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea to save Jesus? Thank God it was Friday!

12. Or Was It Thursday?

It was quite customary that men and women all sat together to partake the Passover meal. On the particular visit to Jerusalem there were several women in Jesus' company but it is surprising that none of them, even the Virgin Mary, was present at the "Last Supper". Could it be that Jesus was following the Essene tradition where women did not join the men on the table? If so, then it is possible that Jesus was also following the Essene calendar and tradition which would then mean that the "Last Supper" was held on the Wednesday prior to Sabbath of the Passover week. The crucifixion thus may have been on the Thursday before the Sabbath. Even this does not clarify the problem of "three days and three nights" because Jesus in this particular scenario will be in "the belly of the earth" only two days and three nights. The whole confusion even on the day of crucifixion creates doubt about the event itself. Was Jesus really crucified?

13. Or Was It Wednesday?

Referring to his "resurrection" Jesus is said to have mentioned that on "the third day he shall rise again" (MK 10:34). Notwithstanding that this important prophecy is not corroborated by any of the other three Gospels. Apologists take pains to state that "three days" means Friday the day of crucifixion, Saturday the day of Sabbath, and Sunday the day of resurrection.

However, others admit that if Jesus was put in "the heart of the earth" on Friday night and "rose from the dead" sometimes on Saturday night then he was there no more than two nights and one day. They also admit that "If Jesus did not fulfill that sign, then he was an imposter and you are without a Savior!" They are therefore at pains to prove whatever Matthew records about "three days and three nights" [The Crucifixion was Not On Friday: Worldwide Church of God]. They assert that crucifixion actually took place on a Wednesday. They try to prove this by a lot of manipulation of dates creating a "special Sabbath in the year 31 C.E. This confusion underlines the uncertainties of crucifixion. Later in this chapter we shall determine that the sign of Jonah regarding this crucifixion period had in fact nothing to do with "three days and three nights" and may possibly have been inserted by a later scribe, or even Matthew himself, as a personal interpretation of the sign. It has no relevance to the resurrection event.

14. The Passover (Paschal) Lamb

With so much doubt and confusion over the timing of crucifixion it is quite probable that the timing was concocted in order to depict Jesus as a Passover lamb. New Testament itself is

full of similar efforts to fabricate events to fit certain biblical quotations. If the Pauline Church could change or concoct the date of birth of Jesus to coincide it with that of Sun-god then they could be competent to let the crucifixion date coincide with the festival of Ishtar(Easter) as well as Passover — two birds with one shot!

15. At Herod's Court

Jesus belonged to Judaea whose king was Herod. Because of the (doubtful and illogical) question of jurisdiction Pilate sent Jesus to Herod's court for trial and sentence. Herod was a Jew. If the chief priests did have a case, or even if they did not have a strong case, Herod could have been easily influenced to kill a blasphemous person whose teachings were causing disaffection among the people and could also lead to Roman intervention. But he did not crucify Jesus. Could it be expected that Pilate would do that after declaring: "I have ... found nothing in him to support your charges. No more did Herod, for he has referred him back to us"(LK 23:14,15).

16. Saint Procla's Dream

"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him"(MT 27:19). Romans, being pagans would take a careful note of such omens. Was Pilate affected by his wife's foreboding? In the Synaxaria of the Greeks Procla, the wife of Pilate, is commemorated for having pleaded against the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate and his wife Procla are considered saints in the Aethiopic order, Pilate for having declared Jesus' innocence by washing his hands. Did he really wash his hands off this innocent, just man, even after his wife's pleading? Or, did he decide to hoodwink the Jews and planned the crucifixion in such a way as to save Jesus?

17. The Death Sentence

Why should Jesus be crucified anyway? On charges of sedition Pilate was sure there was no case. On charges of blasphemy he should not be bothered. Even if he was satisfied that Jesus was a nuisance this would not be enough cause to kill him against his own best judgment. There is no mention anywhere in the Gospels that people were getting unruly because of Jesus or there was a law and order problem. For being a so-called nuisance he visibly flogged him. Why kill him when "clearly he has done nothing to deserve death"(LK 23:15)?

Romans were supposed to be good administrators. "It is not Roman practice to hand over any accused man before he is confronted with his accusers and given an opportunity of answering the charge"(Acts 25:16). It is doubtful if under such a process Pilate will crucify someone of whose innocence he was now convinced. After all it was not a 'capital crime' according to the Roman law to call oneself "Son of God" even if Jesus claimed himself to be so. This is confirmed in connection with Paul's trial at Caesarea not only by the Roman Governor Festus(Acts 25:25) but also by the Jewish King Herod Agrippa I and his fellow courtiers. "This man, they said, is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment". Yet Paul's crime was even more grave because he not only declared Jesus to be Son of God, but also claimed that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that he himself was an "Apostle" even if to the Gentiles, which would have confused the Roman Governor as being a blatant impossible falsehood.

When Paul was hauled up on charges of his blasphemic teachings before the proconsul Gallio in Achaia, the proconsul ruled: "If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O Ye

Jews, reason would that I should bear with you; but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters"(Acts 18:14,15). Earlier to this the Sanhedrin had arrested the "Apostles" for teaching about the "resurrection" of Jesus "and they wanted to put them to death. However, a very learned pharisee called Gamaliel persuaded the council not to carry out the sentence. All they did was to flog them and ordered them to give up speaking in the name of Jesus and discharged them(Acts 5). Could Pilate sentence Jesus to death while Herod would refuse to do so as would also Agrippa, Festus and Gallio in the case of Paul or Sanhedrin itself in the case of the Apostles (Acts 5)?.

18. The Crowd

It is hard to believe that the typical Jewish crowd which had so recently welcomed Jesus on his entry into Jerusalem would now be thirsting for his blood. There would have been some Galileans around. At least some voices could have been heard in his favour. If there was also a charge of sedition then Zealots ought to have created some agitation then or thereafter. The only explanation could be that the trial was held in extreme secrecy without marching Jesus through the streets. It is unlikely that there was any crowd. Romans would have seen to it that no such crowds gathered. It would have been too risky at the time of the festival.

19. Washing Off The Hands

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it"(MT 27:24). This is reported only by Matthew. There is no historical record that Romans had at any time adopted this Jewish practice. Matthew writing for the Jewish-Christian readers seems to be garnishing his narration.

20. Golgotha

The gospels depict the Crucifixions as a large-scale public affair accessible to the multitudes and attended by a cast of thousands at a place called Golgotha, "the place of the skull"(MK 15:22; MT 17:33; LK 23:33; JN 19:17). The place is supposed to be a barren more or less skull-shaped hill littered with the skulls of earlier victims of Roman crucifixions since crucified bodies were denied any burial. Yet the Gospels themselves suggest very different circumstance. "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in a garden a new seculchre, wherein was never man yet laid"(JN 19:41). According to Luke(23:49) the event was witnessed by people, including the women, from "a far off". This would indicate a private crucifixion performed on private property. The site was possibly the Garden of Gethsemane. If this indeed was the private garden owned by Joseph of Aramathaea(MK 15:46; MT 27:60; LK 23:53) then this would explain why Jesus, prior to Crucifixion, could make such free (secret) use of the place, and the need for an inside informer to lead Jesus' captors to this secret place of rendezvous. Now it would be a fit place for a private burial in an undefiled place so that "Jesus" could be rescued and whisked away.

21. The Accusation

"And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS"(MT 27:37). John writing later improves on this: "they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then

read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, write not, the King of the Jews; but that he had said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, what I have written I have written" (JN 19:18-22). It is highly improbable that Pilate could write in Hebrew. There is no record of such accusations for the two thieves who were crucified along with Jesus.

Let us put aside the difference in the accusations as quoted by Matthew and John. What is perplexing is whether having declared the innocence of Jesus and washing his hands off the sin of the blood of this innocent man Pilate in his exhuberance would take the trouble of writing the accusation in his own hand and more so in three languages, sitting on Gabbatha.

"In Rome's Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme there is a "titulus", a puzzling piece of work with an inscription just decipherable as JESUS THE NAZARENE, KING OF THE JEWS, written in Greek, Latin, and Aramaic [not Hebrew]. This "titulus" is said to have been discovered by Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, at the so-called site of the Holy Sepulchre. Somewhat unconvincingly, the Greek and Latin have been written from right to left in the manner normal for Aramaic. It is generally considered to be a sharp fourth-century forgery (Ian Wilson: Jesus, The Evidence).

It may be pointed out that if and when a "titulus" was written it was a plaque made out of plaster and was carried preceding the condemned criminal indicating his name and the crime. It is most doubtful, rather unbelievable, if Pilate would be preparing the plaster plaque or anything like that. According to the timetable of events given by the Gospels themselves there was no time for such "niceties".

22. The Time Factor

According to Mark, Matthew and John, Jesus was brought to the Roman Governor's court early in the morning. But if the trial by the Jewish Council took place after day-break (LK 22:64) then Jesus could not have been taken to the Court until late in the morning. Pilate must have taken some time to come out in his proper robes to formally hear a grievous complaint. The drama of the trial, the mockery, the flogging, the trip to Herod's palace and back, the march to Golgotha outside the city, the preparations for crucifixion of the three condemned persons including the two robbers; all this must have consumed several hours. It is, therefore, doubtful if "the hour of crucifixion was nine in the morning" (MK 15:25). Matthew and Luke, who have otherwise borrowed heavily from Mark, also do not endorse this and prefer to remain silent. John is too busy making Pilate go in and out of his headquarters carrying out proximity discussions with Jesus and his prosecutors. With all that activity Jesus was still at the Court of Pilate by noon (JN 19:14). Crucifixion could take place only much later in the afternoon.

The three synoptic Gospels agree that "darkness fell over the whole land at about mid-day and lasted until three hours in the afternoon. John does not support this. Whatever the sequence of things or the actual time table, it was not earlier than three in the afternoon when Jesus is stated to have said "I thirst" and was given wine/vinegar on a hyssop and soon after "breathed his last" (JN 19:28-30). Thus the total time between being put on the Cross and dying is not more than six hours. Most likely it was less than three hours if we accept John's inspired words. Could Jesus have died in such a short time while the other two victims were still alive even later in the evening? Christian apologists faced with the glaring discrepancy have gone on to explain the difference in time record in various Gospels. To be fair to them one such explanation is quoted below:-

"There are two possible solutions which carry reasonable weight. One solution centers on the word 'about' in John's statement of the time. He reveals that it was not exactly the sixth hour, but only 'about' this time". "Also, Mark's account does not force us to believe that it was at 'exactly' 9 a.m. when Jesus was put on the Cross Another possibility is that John is using a different method of reckoning time than Mark. We know for a fact, from Plutarch, Pliny, Aulus Gellius and Macrobius, that Romans calculated the civil day from midnight, just as we do today. Thus, John's sixth hour would make it 6 a.m. as the time of the last of the trials of Jesus, and His sentencing, giving adequate time for the events leading up to the crucifixion which, in Mark, was at 9 a.m. or afterwards"(Josh McDowell and Don Stewart: "Answers to Tough Questions).

It is interesting that even the apologists find it a 'tough question' and that, as they also admit in their book "This does indeed present a difficulty". It seems difficult to decide which of their solution may be accepted for both carry reasonable weight with them. The first solution is 'about' far-fetched since it would mean that both Mark and John were making wild approximations. Of course, we should be aware that when Mark says 9 a.m. and John says sixth hour they are not reckoning time the way we would do today as 9.00 a.m. or 6.00 p.m. and so on. They could be saying "give or take fifteen minute" in our modern parlance. Thus 9 a.m. could be reasonably accepted as 8.45 — 9.15 and sixth hour could be taken as 5.45 — 6.15. We could allow a further margin of a couple of minutes this way and that. But to consider "9 a.m." and "about sixth hour" look alike is about too far we can stretch!

As for the second solution we must realise that John is considered by the fundamentalists to be the "beloved disciple", a thorough-bred Jew brought up in the tradition of the Jews. His reckoning of the time ought to be the same as that of Mark who was not even from Judaea or Samaria. If he is the same Mark who was nephew of Barnabas and about whose conduct Paul fell off with Barnabas, then Mark was from Cyprus where he may well be used to reckon time according to the Roman manner. It would be further interesting to consider what if Mark, who was writing his Gospel in Rome, had also become used to reckoning time the same way as John, in which case "And it was third hour, and they crucified him"(KJV. MK 15:25) would mean that Jesus was secretly crucified not long after mid-night or much before day-break! It may also seem rather odd that Pilate would give in to a mid-night trial at his court for a little known Jew's blasphemy in order to be able to deliver his verdict at 6 a.m. after a long trial including even a trial at Herod's court.

The explanation also does not reckon with Luke(23:66) which states that "as soon as it was day" the trial of Jesus started in the Jewish Council. By this account John's "six hour" must mean "noon" or later. Indeed, according to NEB "It was the eve of Passover, about noon"(JN 19:14) when Pilate took seat at Gabbatha. That would mean the crucifixion late in the afternoon if not later.

Obviously, not only the question is tough for the apologists, it is tough luck as well! The discrepancy not only stays but is further confounded.

23. Who Carried the Cross?

According to Mark(15:21), Matthew(27:32), and Luke(23:26) Jesus was spared the trouble of carrying the Cross on which he was to be crucified. However, John(19:17) asserts that he carried his own cross. Jesus had said "No one who does not carry his cross....can be a disciple of mine"(LK 14:27) and John could not but assert that Jesus did carry his own Cross even though the other three had mentioned that Simon of Cyrene was made to carry the Cross. As Mark was

writing his Gospel there must have been people around who may have seen or heard that Simon carried the cross for Jesus. John had no such constraint for most of the eyewitnesses would be dead by now. It seems John's version, inspired or otherwise, is not reliable.

While Simon carried the cross for Jesus, the other two victims were carrying their own. Why this preferential treatment for Jesus? Evidently those who were conspiring to save Jesus did not want Jesus to suffer too much. Every little gesture would help toward his safety. This would not be the only preferential treatment accorded to Jesus.

It may also be mentioned that in such cases where a victim was actually crucified on cross-beams he carried only the wooden cross-piece and not the whole cross. This cross piece was then nailed to the vertical post that was already in place. Simon of Cyrene was thus carrying (if he did) only the cross beam and not the whole cross. If Jesus was tied to a stake, as it seems, then even this did not happen!

24. The Drugged Wine/Vinegar

Soon after reaching Golgotha, the place of crucifixion "he was offered drugged wine" (MK 15:23). Apparently this was a humane gesture so that whatever was to be done to him could be done to him in a drugged or unconscious state. This wine was apparently "mixed with myrrh" but later writer Matthew describes it as heartless "Vinegar and gall" (27:34). This may have been to show that this gesture, not accorded to other two victims, was not a preferential one for Jesus but to further enhance the torture. This could also be an attempt to match this with a prophecy wherein the psalmist describes his own suffering with poetic exaggeration: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps 69:21).

Could it be that Pilate having decided that Jesus was indeed innocent took steps to ensure Jesus' safety? This could also have been due to the pleadings of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. He may have instructed the centurion to make it a mock crucifixion. This could be possible only if it was ensured that the body did not move. Since Jesus would not accept the drugged wine the centurion would look for another opportunity which will come not much later.

25. The Manner of Crucifixion

Crucifixion of criminals was a common Roman practice. It was the means of slow death in painful torture to be a manifest lesson of what could happen to those who dared to defy the Roman power. About a hundred years before Jesus' crucifixion a band of some six thousand gladiators and slaves, who had rebelled against Rome, were defeated and captured by the Roman General Marcus Lucinius Grassus and crucified along the road from Rome to Capua. There they remained for several days, a testimony to Roman might and terror.

There were several manners of crucifixion. The victims were sometimes tied to a stake and sometimes nails were pierced through their wrists and ankles according to the amount of torture intended for them. The victim had to bear the weight of his body and tend to crouch so that he would need to push up and down in order to be able to breathe. The victim would take two to three days to die in exhaustion and suffocation. A more 'humane' way to hasten death would be to break the victim's legs so that he could not exert to breathe and would die quicker of suffocation. There was also a manner of providing a "saddle" between the legs to bear the weight of the body. This would make the victim somewhat comfortable but enhance the torturous time period for the victim to die.

"We cannot come to any final conclusion as to the precise form of the cross on which Jesus was crucified We need to revise our mental image of Jesus' crucifixion on this point as well" (Paul Kroll: To Know Jesus and Him Crucified, The Plain Truth Magazine, April 1993, pp. 16).

The Gospels tell us that Jesus was "fastened" to the cross. The manner of "fastening" is not indicated. It is from the apocryphic "Lost Gospel of Peter" that we learn that Jesus was "nailed" to the cross. After his so-called resurrection Jesus shows his hands to the doubting Thomas: who had said "unless I put my fingers into the place where the nails were, and my hands into his side, I will not believe it" (JN 20:25). Believe what? -- that Jesus had not been nailed to the cross and therefore did not die? Or, that Jesus was indeed nailed to the cross; in which case it would be proof of his having been nailed to the Cross but not of his death and resurrection. Jesus tells Thomas "Reach your finger here, see my hands, reach your fingers here and put it into my side" (JN 20:27). What did Jesus mean by that? Did he imply "look I am the one who was crucified but am alive as you can see" or "look for yourself I was not nailed to the cross so the question of my death does not arise"? Take your pick for the text is amenable to various interpretations. Thomas, in any case must have known only second hand about the crucifixion. This was happening a week after the Passover. The wounds, if any, may not yet be fully healed. It would have been difficult for Jesus to walk around, let alone roam around between Jerusalem and Emmaus. If through the miracle of resurrection Jesus' wounds had already been cured then there was nothing for him to show for his crucifixion. Thomas could only conclude that no harm had been done to Jesus and that he had never been crucified.

The Gospels also do not provide us with such essential details of Jesus' suffering and his pain and anguish as the nails were being hammered through his body. Did the robbers cry out in pain? Did the wounds bleed? It looks as if the three victims were not nailed but fastened with rope (or thongs) otherwise the Gospels would have described the suffering of the suffering Messiah. This would then imply more forcefully that steps were being taken to ensure that Jesus would not die on the Cross.

26. "I Thirst"

According to John "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (JN 19:28-30). Apparently they gave him the same wine/vinegar which had been mixed with myrrh. If Jesus felt thirsty and said so then he must have been conscious of himself at least to that extent. Death would not come so suddenly. Normally, having received the succour he should have been a little more conscious. If he really did become unconscious then what could have happened is that after taking the drugged drink he became unconscious. This was the opportunity the centurion had been looking for in order to make it look as if Jesus had died. Those watching the spectacle of crucifixion must have thought that he had indeed died. There is no way for a common man to distinguish between an unconscious person and a dead person except by feeling the pulse or heartbeat or the breath. In actual life there are innumerable instances of persons who having been declared dead even by qualified medical attendants have "come back to life". A similar event is recorded in Acts(14:19-20): "They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city supposing he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him he rose up and entered the city". In case of Jesus, no one even touched his body to ascertain his death at least not the Jews.

It is noteworthy that hyssop (*hyssopus officinalis*) does not grow in Palestine. "John" writing in a foreign land did not realise this.

27. E-loi, E-loi, Lama Sabachthani

It is later than three in the afternoon of that Friday of Crucifixion. Jesus has been hanging on the cross for three hours or perhaps less. In unendurable pain he cries out loud: "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?(MK 15:34). Mark who had been a Jew himself must have felt that even though he was writing in Greek, the true effect of that tragic cry could be had only by the very words in Aramaic that Jesus may have uttered at that dark moment. We wish we could have access to more of the original words of Jesus in his Aramaic tongue in order to understand his real message. Unfortunately all these words have been lost, either through neglect or deliberate obliteration. What has come to us is mostly through Greek. Even the words Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani recorded by Mark are given as "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" by Matthew(27:46). Luke does not quote these words since according to him what Jesus actually said was "Father, unto thy hands I commend my spirit"(23:46). John would not paint a picture of Jesus, the Saviour, in despair so he makes him say "It is finished"(19:30).

Was Jesus really in agony? It must be. Even before crucifixion, he had with anguish and dismay said to his disciples: "My heart is ready to break with grief". He prayed: 'My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt'. He prayed this again and again"(MT 26:36-44, LK 22:41-43).

Let us set aside the doctrinal question whether the will of Jesus could be different from that of God, the Father. If Jesus, the Son of God, was being offered as a sacrificial lamb for atonement of the sins of mankind, then why would he want this 'cup' to be taken away from him? He should have taken this cup gladly as many martyrs had done before him and since then. (Socrates had taken his "cup" of poison calmly!). Why would "God, the Son" want to shirk from something for which he had come down to earth ostensibly on the behest of "God, the Father"? Realizing this John(12:27) makes Jesus say: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour".

In any case, did God forsake Jesus, His "Only Begotten Son"? "Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh him?"(Job 27:9). From various passages from Bible itself we learn that "He preserveth not the life of the wicked; but giveth right to the poor"(Job 36:6). "The Lord is far from the wicked; but he heareth the prayer of the righteous"(Prov 15:29); "The fear of Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short"(Prov 10:27); "The fear of the wicked will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous shall be granted"(Prov 10:24); "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of all"(Ps 34:19); "God does not listen to the sinners but he listens to anyone who is devout and obeys his will"(JN 9:31-32). Even Jesus himself had asserted; "He who sent me is present with me, he has not left me alone"(JN 9:29).

It is not likely that Jesus would have complained about God having forsaken him. Yet it is all the more unlikely that after Jesus having made his prayer God will not come to the rescue of the righteous man Jesus, let alone His "Only Begotten Son"! "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"(MT 26:53). Here now was the appeal made by Jesus for divine interference. And so, "at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. There was an earthquake, the rocks split and graves opened and many of God's saints were raised from sleep"(MT 27:51-53). All this must have been a sign of God's help to Jesus. We mortals under-

estimate the powers and the ways of God. There was the option to 'snatch' him away as would later happen in the case of Philip (Acts 8:40) or the angels could have whisked away Jesus as supposedly they did with Peter (Acts 12). Indeed this is what is stated to have happened according to the Gospel of Barnabas. But we cannot produce this evidence since this is not acceptable to the Christians. God had a better plan. Jesus was made to come off ALIVE from the Cross!

Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani is, in fact, the opening line from Psalm 22 which also includes a number of other so-called prophecies:

1. My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me
7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying
8. He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
16. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and feet.
17. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me?
18. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.
24. When he cried unto him, he heard.

It is amazing how prophetic this Psalm proved to be. Or, did the Gospel writers deliberately narrate the crucifixion story to fit the Psalm? The way the Gospel writers have brought in various "prophecies" in their texts it is obvious that this was their favourite method of creating incidences. It was according to the spirit of the time!

We should however be particularly interested in verse 24 which the Gospels writers chose to overlook: "When he cried unto him, he heard". If other parts of the "prophecy" were fulfilled then we can also conclude that "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani" did not go unheard. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him" (Ps 91:15). The Gospel writers overlooked this particular "prophecy"! Obviously because it did not fit into their story and did not suit them.

The early Christian "saints" were very particular in finding hidden "prophetic" or "Messianic" meanings in Old Testament books and especially so in the Psalms. But they quoted only what suited them. We can very well understand their overlooking many others because these did not fit into their scheme of things:

- Ps(3:4) I cried unto the Lord with my voice and he heard me out of his holy hill.
- Ps(4:3) The Lord will hear when I call unto him.
- Ps(6:9) The Lord hath heard my supplication.
- Ps(9:12) He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
- Ps(18:6-19) In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple and my cry came before him even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled.....the darkness was under his feet....he made darkness his secret place.....HE DELIVERED ME from my strong enemy and from them which hated me....
- Ps(41:1) The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him ALIVE.

Ps(91:15:16) He shall call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and shew him my salvation.

We can identify many such passages in the Psalms. In particular, Matthew(4:6) and Luke(4:10-11) themselves quote two "prophecies" in connection with Jesus' temptation by the devil:

Ps(91: 11) He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

Ps(91:12) They shall bear thee in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone
Even John(9:31) has recorded that "God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth".

However, those who would not hesitate to find Messianic meanings in the English National Anthem "God Save the King" because it is also included in II Chr(23:11), chose to overlook these "prophecies" because these spoke of DELIVERANCE and not of death. If there was any prophecy in the Psalms, then this prophecy emphasises life and not death.

Understandably the Gospel writers also overlooked a very moving song by King David, parts of it are reproduced as below:

II Sam 22

4. I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
7. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.
8. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth.
17. He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;
18. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me.
51. He is the tower of salvation for his king; and shewest mercy to his anointed, unto David and to his seed evermore.

We also know of another "prophecy" according to which Jesus was to have been named IMMANUEL (God with us). Curiously, Jesus was never so named. Could it be that the prophecy was fulfilled in God being with Jesus at that crucial moment, rather than forsaking him? Jesus (or whosoever was put on the Cross) went into a merciful swoon and was taken off ALIVE from the Cross.

28. Breaking of the Legs

John(19:31-33) relates how the Jews went to Pilate and told him that the next day being Sabbath, and especially the Passover, they would like the bodies of the victims to be taken off. This required breaking of the legs in order to make them die quicker. Soldiers then broke the legs of one of the criminals on one side of Jesus, then those of the second on the other side of Jesus, and when they came to Jesus they saw that he was dead already 'they break not his legs'.

It is clear that the two criminals had not died after having been on the cross for three to six hours perhaps as long as nine hours as their legs were broken towards the evening. Jesus is very unlikely to have died by three in the afternoon when he was given drugged wine/vinegar. He was therefore likely to be unconscious when the soldiers came to him. He was not dead but ALIVE and it was only part of the conspiracy that the soldiers spared him.

An interesting part of John's version, which is not narrated by any other Gospel, is that he also brings in yet another "prophecy" in his usual manner: "For these things were done that the scripture shall be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken"(JN 19:36). This is a reference

to Psalm(34:29): "He [the Lord] keepeth all his [the righteous one's] bones; not one of them is broken". Whether or not it actually prophesied Jesus' body we do not know. John presents Jesus as a sacrificial lamb which had to be unblemished. For it is commanded: Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord, thy God, any bullock, or sheep wherein is a blemish..."(Deut 17:1); "Neither shall you break a bone thereof"(EX 12:46).

It is significant to note that the soldiers broke the legs of one bandit, then skipped Jesus and broke the legs of the second bandit and then came back to Jesus only to find that he was already dead, or so he looked. This contradicts the earlier report that he died at three in the afternoon, because the soldiers who were the nearest to the condemned seemed not to be aware even by the evening time whether Jesus had indeed died.

29. Piercing of Side

John is not content with just one prophecy: "And again another scripture saith, they shall look on him whom they pierced"(JN 19:37). Unfortunately we may not agree with John for he takes only a part of a sentence out of its content. The actual "prophecy" referred to here is from Zechariah(12:10); "...they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him..."

John fits the "prophecy" to the crucifixion by telling us that "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came there out blood and water"(JN 19:34). Synoptic Gospels do not record any such instance. It is not likely that the soldiers jabbed the side of Jesus and not of the two bandits. Even if it did happen that one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus to verify his death then it is hardly likely that blood would come out of the body which had already been dead for more than three hours. Coming out of blood only confirms that Jesus must have been ALIVE as dead bodies do not bleed. This act further confirms that even the soldiers were not sure if Jesus had already died. Gospel estimation of Jesus' death at three in the afternoon is a mere speculation.

It is significant that the actual Greek word used in the earliest manuscripts for this so-called "piercing is" NYSSIEN meaning "scratching". Obviously this was a masquerade acted to mislead the bystanders watching from quite a distance.

30. The Wounds

Could Jesus die from the wounds that he may have sustained even if he was nailed to the cross? Unless Jesus bled profusely, and the Gospels do not tell us so, it is highly unlikely that he could die of the wounds. The jab (scratch) on the side would also be not enough to kill him. It is stated to have been made only to check if he was dead, not intended to kill him.

31. Suffocation

The two criminals did not suffocate in six/nine hours. There is no reason that Jesus would die in that time. Could he have choked with the wine/vinegar? This would indicate a violent cough which did not take place. Jesus just swooned and looked as if he breathed his last. He lost his consciousness due to the drugged wine/vinegar. He was ALIVE!

32. The Storm

"By now it was mid-day and a darkness fell over the whole land, which lasted until three in the afternoon; the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

Then Jesus gave a loud cry and....died....The crowd who had assembled for the spectacle, when they saw what had happened went home beating their breasts"(LK 23:44-48).

The crowd would have consisted of two types of people: those who had "assembled for the spectacle" and had little sympathy for Jesus, and those who were there because of their concern for Jesus. The first type of crowd must have scattered as the storm started raging. Only the determined and really concerned ones would be around by three in the afternoon. After Jesus "died" they too went home. Perhaps Jesus' own near relatives and women from Galilee could have stayed back until the burial. Even so, as we learn from the burial accounts, there were only a couple of women who were around and none of them had the opportunity to touch the body. It must have been a divine plan to keep the secret and have the least number of eyewitnesses when "Jesus was taken off the Cross ALIVE!

33. Tribute of the Centurion

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God"(MT 27:54). Why should this pagan Roman declare that only Jesus, out of the three on the crosses at Golgotha, was the Son of God? To a Roman "Son of God" would obviously mean 'a great hero' nothing to do with the connotation that Christians attach to this word. Even to the Jews it would either mean blasphemy or it would just connote holy prophethood. The centurion must have had at least some feeling before-hand of Jesus' innocence and holiness. He must have been sympathetic to him before-hand. Perhaps, Pilate had told him of his wife's premonition and directed him to be careful with him to ensure that he did not die.

34. The Virgin Mary

If there is any truth in John's statement that "near the cross where Jesus hung stood his mother, with her sister, Mary wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene"(JN 19:25), then it is most unlikely that she would also leave with the crowd and not until Jesus had been buried. In the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rome there is the famous statue called PIETA by Michaelangelo showing dead Jesus lying in the lap of his mother. John does not mention this. Even Michaelangelo seems to be imagining things. Mary was no where around when Jesus was taken off the cross and taken for burial. She was also absent when the other women went to the "empty" tomb. At least that is the impression we get from the Gospels. Where was she? It is obvious that she, alongwith her other sons and sister, was on her way to Galilee where Jesus had promised to meet them. This is why the synoptic Gospels do not show them at the site of crucifixion. She is also not a witness to resurrection. Except for a small mention of her presence much later(Acts 1:14) we do not hear of her any more. History has no further record of her!

35. John The Elder

It is perplexing that while "John" was present at the site of crucifixion, there being no other male disciples around, and also took charge of Mary, the mother of Jesus(JN 19:27), he does not mention his own presence when Joseph of Arimathea took charge of the body. In fact according to Mark "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses" were the only ones present"(MK 15:47). Apparently he too must have slipped out. He is then the first one to reach the sepulchre after the women report that Jesus had risen(JN 20:4). Why did he not stay at the Calvary site until Jesus had been buried? Apparently, he may have realised either that it was not Jesus who was hanging on the Cross, or else that Jesus was in safe condition and he needed to go and prepare for his journey to Galilee or for the secret hideout.

36. Verification of Death

If the Jews were anxious to kill Jesus and also suspected foul play, then they must also be anxious to verify his death. Strangely this was left entirely to the centurion and his soldiers. Jews themselves were busy in their preparation for the Passover. The soldiers left to themselves went through nominal motions but were in fact ensuring that Jesus remained ALIVE!

37. Pilate's Astonishment

When the evening came it was time to take off the dead bodies from the crosses. "Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counselor...went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marveld if he were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph"(MK 15:44). This underlines the fact that Jesus was not expected to die in such a short time. Pilate had to get confirmation from the centurion if his instructions had been followed. It was so "confirmed", and the body of the LIVING Jesus was handed over to Joseph. It is notable that while Joseph went in boldly to crave the "dead" body he, or anyone else, is not reported to have said anything to defend him. The verdict had been "unanimous"(MK 14:64), any dissenters were obviously absent. It seems they may have already plotted the sequence of events to save him from dying knowing that it will be fruitless to plead his innocence which might make the matter worse.

38. The Secret Bargain

According to Roman Law of the time a crucified man was denied all burial. Indeed, guards were customarily posted to prevent relatives or friends removing the bodies of the dead. Why then Pilate, in a flagrant breach of procedure, readily granted Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea who was apparently not even a relative of Jesus (or was he?)? Pilate could hardly grant the body to a random stranger especially in violation of a normal procedure.

It is intriguing that in the original Greek version of Mark's story, when Joseph asks for Jesus' body, he uses the word SOMA, a living body. Pilate assenting to the request, employs the word PTOMA, a corpse, a dead body. All this attests to the collusion and connivance on Pilate's part. Indeed this is highly probable. "The historical Pilate, as opposed to the one depicted in the Gospels, would not have been above sparing Jesus' life in exchange for a sizeable sum of money and perhaps a guarantee of no further political agitation"(Michael Baigent, et. et: Holy Blood, Holy Grail).

Joseph of Aramathea was no stranger, after all. He being a wealthy member of the religious elite, the Sanhedrin, was a very influential man and must have had direct access to Pilate. Did he and Pilate then reach a lucrative political bargain and enact a mock crucifixion, a skillfully stage-managed ritual?

As for the fear of the Emperor, Pilate had already taken the risk, in the name of peace and harmony and as a goodwill gesture to "the crowd, to release a notoriously dangerous criminal and to order the crucifixion of a pacifist religious visionary. With a suitable incentive making it possible to send a few precious gifts to the Emperor himself the bargain could well have been explained, if at all necessary, even to the Emperor. Any such correspondence existing in the Roman archives would have been conveniently destroyed by the Church when it became the state religion. The Church knew well how to take care of its interests.

39. No Burial Bath

None of the Gospels indicate if Jesus' body was given the ritual bath before burial. This would be unusual as no pious Jew would even consider burying the dead body of another Jew

without giving it a ritual last bath. We have the case of Tabitha whose body was washed after she had died (Acts 9:37). It is sometimes suggested that Romans did not necessarily allow condemned bandits to be washed before burial. But then such victims were also not allowed to be buried. The burial of Jesus was being undertaken by two pious Jews handling the dead body of their "Lord and Master" who was considered at the least, a prophet of God. The burial was indeed being undertaken quietly, secretly, with no Jew or Roman around except for a couple of sympathetic women. In any case Joseph had specifically begged the body and his wish had been graciously granted by Pilate with no strings attached. All this confirms that since Jesus was ALIVE, there was no need for the required burial bath and Joseph and Nicodemus were only going through certain motions to cover up their conspiracy or perhaps they were only bandaging the wounds before safekeeping the wounded body.

40. The Spices

All the three Synoptic Gospels tell us that Joseph took the body, wrapped it up and put it in the tomb. John brings in Nicodemus as well with "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (JN 19:39,40). According to the Plain Truth magazine (April 1993, pp. 29): "The manner of preparation of Christ's body for burial was not unusual in itself, but the large quantity of myrrh and aloe was". Most likely Nicodemus must have brought the mixture to resuscitate the unconscious body.

41. The Sepulchre

"Now at the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, not yet used for burial. There because the tomb was near at hand and it was the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, they laid Jesus" (JN 19:41,42). How convenient that everything was at hand. Or was it deliberately planned? After all, why should a rich pious Jew want to have his own tomb near the cursed site of crucifixions?

Mark (15:46) says that the tomb was cut out of the rock. Matthew tells us that it was Joseph of Arimathea's own unused tomb. Luke corroborates this. It may not seem a mere coincidence that Joseph hailed from Arimathea, not Jerusalem! It may not be very unusual for him to have a house and a garden in Jerusalem for he was a rich man. He could also have a family tomb in that garden. But having a newly hewn tomb near the place of crucifixion seems more than just a coincidence. It is most likely that he had the tomb especially hewn out for safekeeping of Jesus' body.

The tomb was rather a large one so that both Peter and John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (JN 20:18) could go in. Mary Magdalene saw two angels sitting in the tomb (JN 20:12). In fact, as Mark tells us "they, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, went into the tomb and saw a youth sitting there" (MK 16:5). Luke tells us that when these women went in two men in dazzling garments were at their side (LK 24:4,5). So here we have at least five people in the tomb with place to spare for where the body had laid and now lay the burial linen. Was such a tomb specially prepared for safekeeping a LIVE person? The circumstances indicate that this was indeed a part of the effort to keep Jesus ALIVE!

42. The Burial

If the tomb was hewn out of rock then it must have been a rocky area. The body was taken off the Cross late in the evening. Joseph and Nicodemus would have needed light to carry

out their task. On the previous night those who had come to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane had come "equipped with lanterns and torches"(JN 18:3). Joseph was a man of substantial means. So was Nicodemus. Joseph had gone "in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus"(MK 15:43). Now that Jesus had been crucified and known to have died no one would be interested who buried him. There was now no need to keep the process secretive any more. They could have sought the help of some of their workers and arranged for light.

But this was no ordinary burial..This was a conspiracy to save Jesus. They were going through the motions in case someone may be watching. And there were these women "observing how his body was laid"(MK 15:47). If Jesus was really dead then would these disciples of Jesus be so heartless as not to allow, indeed invite, these women to have a last look at the dead body of their Lord and Master? Hardly understandable, unless, of course, Jesus was not dead and they could take no risk lest the secret be leaked out. Jesus was therefore ALIVE and they could not ask the women to come and touch him. Those women on their part must also have realised the delicateness of the situation and did not ask to be shown the body. Instead "they went home and prepared spices and ointments"(LK 23:56) that they would need to apply to the wounded body of Jesus to promote healing. They had seen "how his body was laid"(LK 23:55) and knew he was ALIVE and in safe hands. No wonder they will be the ones who will eventually announce the "resurrection"!

43. Corpse Impurity

"The Bible forbids anyone with corpse impurity to celebrate Passover(Num 9:9) and most people acquired corpse impurity in the course of a year. It was incurred by being in a room with a corpse, by touching it or by walking over a grave....The removal of this impurity required a week(Num 19)....most pilgrims had to be purified in Jerusalem and this required them to come a week before the festival began....The pilgrims, then, waited for a week near the Temple and prepared themselves spiritually while their bodies were being purified"(E.P. Sanders: The Historical Figure of Jesus, pp. 250).

It is almost certain that Jesus and his followers needed purification when they entered Jerusalem — if nothing else, they had recently visited the grave of Lazarus to "wake him up". Yet the Gospels do not tell us that before entering the Temple at Jerusalem or partaking the Passover meal Jesus and his companions performed the required rites. This sheds doubt on the story of Jesus being crucified over the festival of Unleavened Bread.

Besides, no pious Jew would even go anywhere near the "Place of the Skull" for fear of defilement just on the eve of the festival. Therefore none of the "chief priests and scribes" were present at Jesus' crucifixion at Galgotha.

It is further noteworthy that Joseph of Arimathea had made sure that Jesus' body was placed "in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone" where in no man had been laid before"(MK 15:46, LK 23:53, also MT 27:60), in a garden"(JN 19:41). Thus Jesus' (NOT dead) body was placed in an undefiled place so that everyone handling it may be safe from defilement.

44. The Shroud

In the Cathedral of Turin there is a piece of linen fourteen feet in length, bearing apparent imprints of a crucified body. It is claimed that this is the piece of cloth which Joseph of Arimathea used for wrapping the body of the crucified Jesus. It is often stated that unless the shroud is a fake, it is most likely that Jesus was actually wrapped in this very cloth. Most Protestant scholars dismiss the shroud as a Roman Catholic superstition.

What if the shroud were an authentic burial cloth circa the period of Jesus' crucifixion? It could mean that someone enduring the crucifixion events as of Jesus himself, may have been wrapped in this cloth. It does not prove that Jesus was the one who had been wrapped in it. The shroud, if it were authentic, would only have proved that the description in John which implies "wounding it in linen clothes"(NEB: Strips) was not correct. In fact, Luke also reports Peter seeing "strips of linen lying by themselves"(24:12, RBV, NIV). Manuscripts differ whether Verse 12 describing Peter's visit to the tomb is authentic. NEB omits it. There was also a "napkin which had been over his head not lying with the wrappings but rolled together in a place by itself"(JN 20:7). It is evident that either the Shroud of Turin is a fake or John was fabricating things out of his mind, perhaps both. The fact is not known anyway but the mere fact that Catholic church even accepted that a 'shroud' was used means that it did not put much faith in John's "strips of cloth" version.

45. Strips of Cloth

If Jesus was "wound in linen strips"(JN 19:40, LK 24:12) then it could be that he was in reality wrapped in bandages to cover his wounds.

46. The Posting Of The Guard

Matthew is the only one who tells us that on the very day of the Passover the Chief Priests and Pharisees realised that "that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again"(MT 27:63). It is strange that this thought came to them so late afterwards. So, they asked Pilate to have a guard put at the sepulchre. "Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as ye can"(MT 27:65). Anyway, Pilate must have known that it will be of no effect now. The body must have been whisked away already! "So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch"(MT 27:66). It seems hard to believe that the Jews will place so much emphasis on Jesus' alleged saying when even his disciples did not have any such idea. Even after they received the news they would not believe it: "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead". The whole episode looks like an afterthought of the Gospel writer. In any case being directly in charge of civil affairs the High Priest did not need to seek Pilate's permission to post a guard.

Next day when Mary Magdalene and her companions went to see the sepulchre, "there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door"(MT 28:2). He told them "he is not here, for he is risen"(MT 28:6). When the guard told this to the Chief Priests as to what happened, they gave them large sums of money "Saying, say ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept"(MT 28:13). One may wonder how could they say this if they were asleep and did not see who took the body! And if they did see the disciples snatching the body then why did the guards not resist them! It is also intriguing that while "the guards shook with fear and lay like the dead" at the sight of the angel, the women stood there unpertrurbed!

This is a far-fetched explanation. No Roman(or any other) guard would dare to sleep on duty much less admit it. For a similar offence of negligence of duty at a later date, because of the disappearance of Peter from the prison with the assistance of an angel, "Herod made a close search, but failed to find him, so he interrogated the guards and ordered their execution"(Acts 12:19).

This story may have been fabricated much later. If Jesus did "rise in flesh" he should have walked out at the time the stone was removed. Actually he had been whisked out before the guard sealed the stone, if they did.

47. The Opening Of The Tomb

Mark, Luke and John do not report posting of any guard at the sepulchre. According to them when Mary Magdalene and her companions arrived at the site, the stone had already been rolled away and Jesus was not there, dead or alive. However, according to Matthew, Jesus disappeared from behind the scaled stone. He could not have done so "in flesh" unless he had been whisked away before the arrival of the guard. Even in the case of the apostles when they were arrested and put in the prison "an angel of the Lord opened the prison door during the night and brought them out"(Acts 5:19). Someone must have removed the stone for Jesus to come out!

It is surprising that even after the news broke out people were not excited about the disappearance of the body. Normally, people, Jews and Judo-Christians alike, should have flocked to the tomb. Yet its identity was lost until St. Helena, mother of Constantine, had it "discovered", more than three hundred years later.

48. Mary Magdalene and Her Companions

Who were these women anyway? Luke tells us "...and the twelve were with him, and certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna...."(LK 8:1-3). Do we accord these women sufficient credence to accept their version of Jesus' rising from the dead? The disciples said "nonsense" and "their words seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not"(LK 24:11). Now if they were smart enough they must have realized from "how his body was laid"(LK 23:53) that there was something unusual in the burial process. This must be the reason why they prepared the spices for anointing the (wounded) body (LK 23:56).

It is significant that Paul in his list of "witnesses"(1 Cor 15:4-7) does not mention any of these women! Was Paul also treating their testimony as "non-sense"? Yet the Gospels make them as the primary witnesses. It is interesting that after this episode none of these ladies are heard of any more. Where did all these ladies go? Could they have gone after their Lord and Master wherever he had been taken?

49. Lady of the Seven Devils

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid him(JN 20:1-2). It seems Mary Magdalene was so upset or excited on seeing the stone removed that without looking into the sepulchre she assumed that the body had been removed and ran to inform Peter and the Beloved Disciple that the body had been removed. Was she already expecting this?

50. The Wrapped-Up Napkin

"Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself(JN 20:6-7). It is clear that the "raised Jesus" did not have the need for the burial clothes and left these behind. The fact that the napkin was wrapped up shows that he was not taken out in a hurry. Those who took him away had enough time to even wrap up the head napkin.

51. Why Anoint The Dead Body?

Granted that it may have been the custom to apply perfumes and spices to a dead body. But on that Sunday morning Jesus had been lying "dead" for more than one day ("three days and three nights?"). These religious women who were particular in observing the Sabbath would be defiling themselves in handling the dead body especially in its putrifying state. They had already seen Joseph and Nicodemus apply a hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloe and there was hardly any need to apply some more. The tomb must be stinking from the abnoxious smell of the putrifying body. This is clearly indicated from the episode of raising from dead of Lazarus: "But Martha, the dead man's sister, said, By now the smell will be terrible, for he has been dead for four days"(JN 11:39). Why would these women want to enter a smelling tomb and anoint a putrifying body? It is because they knew that they will be handling a LIVE Jesus whose wounded and sore body would be needing more ointments to recuperate.

Whether Jesus was dead or alive in the sepulcher it would be most unusual and indeed objectionable for unrelated females to handle a male body even for applying spices and ointments.

52. The Unused Ointment

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus....then saith one of the disciples...why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence...then said Jesus, Let her alone against the day of my burying hath she kept this"(JN 12:3-7). Yet "when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him" (MK 16:1). Why did these women have to buy the spices and not use the un-used spikenard perfume? Simply because time for burying Jesus had not yet come. Rather he needed healing for which the women went and bought "sweet spices".

53. Why Wait Till Sunday?

If Mary Magdalene and her companions wanted to anoint the dead body of Jesus then why did they wait till Sunday by which time the body must have started to putrify? Why did they not go on Saturday when the body was still fresh and in a better state? We could say that they were afraid of the "Jews". But this is all the more reason for going on the Sabbath day when the Jews were celebrating the Passover festival. People will be out on streets on Sunday and if there was reason to be afraid of on a Saturday then it was more so on that Sunday.

Granting that these were devoted, pious, religious women wanting to observe the commandment to rest on Sabbath. But here was their Lord and Master's body needing, if it did need, their attention. Most likely they did go on Saturday to look after the ailing Jesus who had already established the tradition of healing the sick on a Sabbath. He restored the eyes of a blind man(JN 9:14), cured the leper by the side of the pool of Bethesda(JN Ch.5), as well as healed the man with the withered arm(MK 3:1, MT 12:10, LK 6:6) all on Sabbath days, and had said "It is permitted to do good on the Sabbath"(MT 12:12). When these women went there on Sunday they had not known that by then the guard had been posted there and, more important, that Jesus had been whisked away even before the guard were posted.

54. The Angels

According to Matthew the angel told Mary Magdalene and her companions: "He has been raised from the dead and is going on before you into Galilee"(MT 28:7). Luke tells us that "two men in dazzling garments appeared beside the tomb"(LK 24:4). These must also be angels

as John(20:12) tells us. The message of these angels was: "why seek ye the living among the dead?"(LK 24:15). Obviously the spirits do not make secret rendezvous. Mary Magdalene, the lady with the seven devils, must have imagined these angels for angels did not appear to any of the other disciples. She already knew of the Galilean rendezvous. There was no need for angels to appear to confirm this nor even to tell her and her companions that the tomb was empty for that was quite apparent to the eye. Appearance of angels was also not necessary to convey the news that Jesus had been "raised". One could not believe such a fantastic news on the word of strangers. Disciples did not believe it and called it "non-sense". Thomas was practical when he insisted that he could not believe it unless he himself verified the fact. Thomas was not "doubting" but was only being pragmatic. Thus appearance of the angels has nothing to do with the raising of Jesus and has been brought in only to provide a holy testimony to the narration conveyed by Mary Magdalene, the lady with the seven devils.

55. The Gardener

When Mary Magdalene found that the body of Jesus was missing she started crying. But when "she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus... She supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him thence; tell me where thou has laid him, and I will take him away"(JN 20:11-15). There should be no doubt that she was talking of a living man. If she meant "buried him" then there was no question of her taking him away. In any case, where, how and why would this Jewess carry the dead body openly if she would be afraid of the "Jews"? Jesus whom she mistook as a gardener was already in disguise and ready to leave for Galilee. Perhaps this may have happened even on Saturday and if she did disclose it later on Sunday then she was allowing time for him to escape with a head start. Anyway, whether Saturday or Sunday, he was fully disguised. If he did go to Emmaus then that too was on way to Galilee. He could not be returning to Jerusalem, and danger. The earliest Gospel of Marks tells us only that he went to Galilee.

56. Jesus' New Clothes

Remember when Lazarus was "raised" he got out of the tomb in his burial clothes?(JN 11:49). If Jesus left his linen shroud, or strips, whatever was the burial material, in the sepulchre then where did he get his new clothes especially when his own clothes had been divided by the Roman soldiers among themselves? Unless the angels brought him a new change of clothes, we must expect that someone from this very earth provided him with the gardener's garb. A gardener in Joseph's garden will be inconspicuous.

57. Touch Me Not

When Mary Magdalene recognized Jesus in his gardener's garb she wanted to touch his feet. Jesus stopped her, saying "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father"(JN 20:17). By this he did not mean to say that she could touch him when he has ascended, for that will not be possible. What he obviously meant was: Do not worry, I am not dead, I am ALIVE, I did not die! But please do not touch me presently for it hurts. Matthew(28:8-10), however, insists that the women did clasp his feet which would mean that they did not hurt. Actually he did ask the disciples to touch him(LK 24:39). In other words it may have been someone else who had been nailed to the cross in place of Jesus for here was Jesus with no after-effects of crucifixion.

58. On Road to Emmaus

Disguise of Jesus in a gardener's clothes must have been very good so that his own disciples could not recognize him on the road to Emmaus. When they did recognize him, he disappeared and then reappeared behind closed doors in Jerusalem. It must all be a "vision" for there is no reason for Jesus to be running around. People in flesh do not go around disappearing or appearing behind closed doors. In fact stories must have been concocted to distract his enemies and persecutors. A misconception need not be based on reality.

59. Being Hungry

When Jesus appeared to his disciples behind closed doors he asked them if they had any meat? They gave him a piece of broiled fish and a piece of honey comb. "He took it and did eat before them". He did this to prove to them of his human nature of flesh and bones. As he told them "a spirit hath no flesh and bones"(LK 24:37-43). He also had breakfast with his disciples on the shores of the Lake in Galilee(JN 21). "Resurrected persons are like angels or spirits"(MT 22:30). They do not need nourishment. "Unless Jesus had only eaten to show that he could eat, it would have been a pretense, something docetic"(Albert Schweitzer: In Quest of the Historical Jesus). Since Jesus ate like a human being, he could not have been resurrected after death. He never died. He had been ALIVE.

60. The Secret Rendezvous

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the Sepulchre, the angel told them to "go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him"(MT 28:7). These women were going when Jesus appeared to them and said: "go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me"(MT 28:10). "Then eleven disciples went away into Galilee, in a mountain where Jesus had appointed them"(MT 28:16).

Luke does not mention this rendezvous but takes Jesus to Emmaus and back in Jerusalem where he appears to his disciples behind closed doors and tells them to "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem ... "(LK 24:49) and then going to Bethany ascends to heaven. John does not repeat the Emmaus story but mentions Jesus's two appearances to his disciples behind closed doors in Jerusalem and the third in Galilee. He seems to be reconciling two different versions within the synoptic Gospels.

If Jesus did indeed go to Galilee and this was the rendezvous preplanned by Jesus during his lifetime(MT 26:32) then it is obvious that Jesus expected that he will be alive as live can be. If Jesus was in his "resurrected spiritual body" then he did not need a preplanned rendezvous. Luke's account ought to have been sufficient.

61. The Witnesses to Resurrection

It is often claimed that resurrection of Jesus is the evidence itself that Jesus died on the Cross. We do not see the logic behind this deduction. Rather, if Jesus did not die on the Cross, the question of resurrection does not arise. His resurrection does not necessarily follow even if he died on the Cross. In any case, for the sake of curiosity, and to make the record straight let us examine the evidence on resurrection. "The Creed" recorded in I Cor(15:3-8) is the earliest record of resurrection: "...Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. And that he was seen of Cephas, then of twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of

whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, ...". Cephas being none other than Peter and Judas no longer being one of the Twelve, Paul's "twelve" should be "ten" and this will make "all the apostles" only a repetition of "Peter plus ten". Paul seems to have ungratefully overlooked Ananias, who had come from Damascus after seeing a vision of Jesus and healed Paul's eyes which were seemingly blinded after his own visionary experience (Acts 9:10). He does not mention Mary Magdalene and her companions! Apparently Paul received this information on his first visit to Jerusalem after his own "seeing of Jesus". If Paul also knew that "five hundred" persons had seen the resurrected Jesus, as he did mention in his Epistle to the Corinthians, being one of his early epistles, then this fact must have also been known to the Gospel writers. Intriguingly none of the four canonical Gospels record this fantastic phenomenon. Luke misses this extraordinary appearance to the five hundred even in his book of Acts (1:2,3) and mentions Jesus' appearance only to the apostles over a period of forty days. Obviously all of them dismissed this fictional incidence as a mere wild talk, too much for the people to stomach.

As for Cephas Peter, besides Paul's mention of him being a witness, the only other mention is in Luke's Gospel: "the eleven gathered together, and hath appeared to Simon" (LK 24:33,34). [Eleven plus Simon (Peter) again make it Twelve!] None of the other three Gospels tell us of Simon (Cephas) Peter's seeing of the resurrected Jesus. (Like 24:12) in KJV is now admitted to be a later interpolation and some of the versions omit it. In John's Gospel Peter and John actually go to the tomb only to find it empty. They did not see the resurrected Jesus at that time. Luke, then, must be recording Cephas' witness by implication only or accepting Paul's own misunderstanding of the information that he had received from James and Peter on his visit to Jerusalem. It is significant that after his "resurrection" Jesus is said to be giving commandments through the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:2). Was he really around, alive?

Paul himself "saw" Jesus only in a trance: "...he came near Damascus. And suddenly there shined around him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him...and the men which journey with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man...when his eyes were opened he saw no man ..." (Acts 9:3-8). The text is not clear as to what he actually saw, or did not see. But apparently he was talking to Jesus. If he "saw" Jesus, then none of his companions saw him. It is doubtful that his companions even heard any voice. At least they did not see Jesus "in person". Could the experiences of others be similar? If Peter really "saw" Moses and Elijah (LK 9:28-36) then it does not mean that he saw their resurrected bodies! Even Ananias saw Jesus only in a vision (Acts 9:10). Paul's statement "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised" (1 Cor 15:16) seems to imply only spiritual rising. Otherwise if other dead also rise likewise then what is so special in Jesus' "rising"? Furthermore having never seen Jesus in his life time, and there being no photographs or images of Jesus available for verification, it is quite reasonable to ask whether even the vision that Paul saw was really that of Jesus!

Paul later modified his experience of his vision: "I fell unto the ground and heard a voice and they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me" (Acts 22:7,9). Perhaps all this was no more than a trance after a lightening shock!

62. The Doubting Thomas

According to Luke (24:23) all the "Eleven" were present when Jesus appeared to them behind closed doors. This should include Thomas. However, according to John's version Thomas

was not present (JN 20:24-25) and had openly expressed doubt about Jesus' resurrection. When Jesus appeared the second time Thomas was present and Jesus told him: "Reach your finger here; see my hands. Reach your finger here and put it in my side, be unbelieving no longer" (JN 20:26-28). Why would Thomas want to do that? Wounds he could have seen with his naked eye. What he would be wanting to verify was that there were no wounds. It is for this purpose that he would need to touch Jesus' body to make sure that there were no wounds. This could only mean that it may not have been Jesus who was put on the Cross at Calvary.

According to John (20:25) the doubting Thomas said: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails..." John apparently overlooked the manner of piercing of the nails which were to have been driven through the wrists and not the thin bones of the hands since otherwise the hands could not bear the weight of the body.

63. No Search For The Body

If it did become known to the Jews that Jesus' body was missing then they ought to have mounted an immediate search. They had feared that the disciples will steal the body "so that the last error shall be worse than the first" (MK 27:64). They should have caught hold of the disciples in order to get the truth out of them. Nothing of this sort happened. First of all it seems doubtful if any guards were at all posted at the tomb. The story must have been concocted later when people may have been asking that if Jesus really foretold his resurrection then why did the Jews not post the guard earlier at the tomb. It seems likely that the myth concerning rising from the dead developed somewhat later when rumours about Jesus' meeting with his disciples started leaking out.

64. No Public Excitement

If Jesus indeed rose from the dead then the very news should have electrified the population of Jerusalem. The mere missing of the dead body if indeed it became known at least to the guard and certain of the Jews, could not have been kept as a secret for very long. The disciples to whom Jesus appeared in person ought to have proclaimed the resurrection immediately unless Jesus specifically told them to keep it a secret as he had been directing them concerning his being a MESSIAH (MT 9:30, 12:16, 16:20). People of Jerusalem ought to have thronged the site of the tomb to see the miracle. Nothing of this sort happened. In fact no such story was told until much later. The disciples kept their secret for the safety of Jesus. Jews must have treated the whole story as "nonsense". Pilate must have been bemused, content with the knowledge that Jesus had already been whisked away to safety. Later there was no need to divulge the secret as the "Christians" were never a threat to Rome during his short stay thereafter.

65. The Proclamation

We are told that "The disciples proclaimed the resurrection story in Jerusalem, in the place Jesus had been killed and buried a powerful argument for the validity of the resurrection story" (Josh McDowell and Don Stewart: Answers to Tough Questions). We do not get any indication from the Gospels that any such proclamation was made in Jerusalem at an early stage. The appearances of "resurrected Jesus" were secret known only to a select few. There is no record of where and when he appeared to the "five hundred" reported by Paul. Luke in his book of ACTS reports: "after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up to heaven. He showed himself to these men after his death, and gave ample proof that he was ALIVE: Over a period of forty days he appeared to them...."

while he was in their company in Jerusalem he told them not to leave Jerusalem. 'You must wait', he said....."(Acts 1:2-4). Thus for at least forty days the knowledge of resurrection was confined only to the apostles. It was much later that "Peter stood up before the assembled brotherhood, about one hundred and twenty in all"(Act 1:15) to inform them of their "witness to resurrection".

It is only at the time of Pentecost that the proclamation was made(Acts 2:24) that "God raised him to life again". By that time it was too late to verify anything. Jesus had already ascended to heaven or wherever. Now it was the word of the apostles that one could believe or disbelieve. The question arises as to why did they not make the proclamation earlier unless they were afraid of Jesus being rearrested!

66. The Cover-up

It has been argued that "The disciples of Jesus had no reason to steal the body, and if they did, they later died for something they knew to be untrue"(Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, Answers to Tough Questions). This, of course, presupposes stealing a "dead" body. The context will be entirely different if they were stealing not a dead but a very much LIVE Jesus whose safety lay in clouding any information about his being alive. An important question: How do we know if these apostles were really teaching about a bodily resurrected Jesus as later Pauline doctrine would have us believe? After all they were not teaching what Paul had been talking and unlike Paul that too to "the Jews only". Even Paul himself seems to have been talking about "rising in spirit. There is, however, a possibility as was stated by none other than Paul: "If the truth of God brings him all the greater honour because of my falsehood, why should I any longer be condemned as a sinner?"(Rom 3:7). It may also be asked whether the disciples were indeed talking about "resurrection" or if the whole thing is a later fabrication by the Pauline Church.

67. Joseph and Nicodemus

It looks odd that we do not hear of Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus after the burial. They are the ones who had boldly sought the body of Jesus and buried it. The garden belonged to Joseph and it is but natural to expect that he would not consider Jesus to be dead and gone and that he would pay a visit to the site on Saturday or Sunday, if not earlier. Yet we do not find these two resourceful people to be anywhere around. They had boldly taken on themselves to bury Jesus. They could not be hiding for fear of the Jews. It should not surprise us if they were already on way to Galilee, or somewhere else, with their beloved Lord and Master.

68. The Sign of Jonah

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master we would see a sign of thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"(MT 12:38- 40). Luke(11:29-30) gives us a shorter version: "there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah" no period of time is mentioned. Matthew also gives this short version later(16:4).

But if the sign of Jonah (Jonas) is concerning his being in a whale's belly for three days and three nights then it has hardly much similarity to the case of Jesus. If Jesus was buried on Friday evening and resurrected on Sunday morning, if not earlier, then he was in the "heart of

the earth" no more than two nights and one day. Jonah went into the Whale's belly ALIVE and came out ALIVE. Thus there was no "resurrection". In fact, according to the earliest canonical Gospel of Marks "no sign shall be given to this generation. With that he left them..."(MK 8:12,13).

What was the sign of Jonah any way? It is said that Jonah had prophesied that because of the sins and iniquities of the Ninevites their city will be destroyed by the wrath of God within 90 days. However, the Ninevites repented and were saved. For once the prophesied doom was averted (Book of JONAH). Jesus was thus warning the Israelites of the coming doom and yet showing them the way to avert it through repentance. Both Jesus and John the Baptist had been warning: "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand" which obviously meant the judgment of God for the iniquities and sins of Israel. Alas, the Jews did not heed these words and no wonder Jerusalem was destroyed not much later. Prophecy of Jonas was fulfilled if not in Ninevah, then certainly in Jerusalem where it now had relevance.

Sign of Jonah had therefore nothing to do with resurrection. Matthew's inspired interpretation is nothing but irrelevant interpolation. It may well have been just as Luke has reported, no more.

69. The Sign Of Noe

The sign of Jonah seems to be complementary to the sign of Noe which no body seems to talk about. In the case of Jonah the Ninevites heeded his warning: Repent and be saved. And thus the Ninevites were saved. In the case of Noah(No'e) his nation did not repent and he was forced to leave them. God's vengeance came to them and they were destroyed.

Interestingly Jesus did talk about the days of No'e(Noah) in the Gospel of Matthew(24:37). And while he also talks about the coming of the Son of Man at that time, it is not in the meaning of resurrection.

70. Rising From The Dead

If Jesus, the divine, had for some inexplicable reason to come out of his divinity and take a human form, in flesh, and be born like a human, then his human death should have been sufficient to complete that experience. Humans do not get raised to life in this world. "The one that goes in the grave does not come back"(Job 7:9-10, 14:13-14) Furthermore, the sacrificial lambs complete their task once they are sacrificed.

John is the only Gospel writer who tells us the story of the rising from the dead of Lazarus. Here thus is an example of a human rising from the dead, in flesh. This story would, however, not be relevant to that of Jesus' resurrection. Firstly, this would underline that rising from the dead does not make a person divine. Secondly, Lazarus eventually did die and not ascend to heaven in flesh. All flesh is mortal and finite. Jesus must also shed his body of flesh. Would that be in his second coming?

Since people do not get raised in flesh, the disciples refused to believe Mary Magdalene when she told them "he is raised". They had thought he had died so his being risen was "nonsense". The fact must be that he did not die in the first instance. What Mary and her companions saw was not Jesus the Resurrected, but "Jesus, the Resuscitated" or most probably Jesus who was never crucified in the first instance!

71. "On The Third Day"

If Jesus was indeed crucified on Friday and found to have "resurrected on Sunday morning then there is no way to account for "on the third day. The phrase, it seems, reflects the

Jewish belief of the period of divine vindication as we may observe from the following statements from the Old Testament:

Gen(22:4): Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off (where Isaac was to be sacrificed).

Gen(42:17-18): And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live: I fear God.

Ex(19:11): [God said unto Moses] And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

Ex(19:16): And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightening . . .

II Sam(1:2): It came even to pass on the third day, that behold, a man came out of the Camp of Saul and his clothes rent, earth upon his head: and so it was when he came to [fugitive] David [to give him the news of Saul's death].

II Kg(20:5): . . . Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord.

Est(5:1): Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house. . .

Hos(6:1): After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Jon(1:17): And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Even in the New Testament when Jesus said of himself: "and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again"(MK 9:31; MT 17:23), his disciples did not understand what he was talking about(MK 9:32; LK 9:45). He also said: "Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected(LK 13:32). Again he spoke of "three days for rebuilding of the Temple(JN 2:18-20) after destruction and that too was in similar Judaic context. It is quite possible that the Gospel writers themselves introduced this term as is evidenced from the fact that it does not occur in any of the writings of Paul who seems to be unaware of such a connection with resurrection.

72. Why Rise From The Dead?

"If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets they will pay no heed even if someone should rise from the dead"(LK 16:31). This is unqualified. If Jesus died on the Cross then his rising from the dead was to be of no avail. If one part of the episode seems like a tall tale, could we put much trust on the other part?

73. Grace Not Works

If "justification" is not by works but by the Grace of God, then what is the necessity for Jesus' death on the Cross? Is God not Merciful?

74. Predestination

According to Calvinist dogma "God has once for all determined, both whom He would admit for salvation and whom he would condemn to destruction ... totally irrespective of human effort. Final fate having been predetermined, what avail is Jesus sacrifice as the wages of our sins?

75. The Unkept Promise

At the Cross Jesus is supposed to have promised one of the robbers "today you shall be with me in Paradise"(LK 23:34). Yet Jesus, is stated to have stayed back, (the doctrinaires say he actually descended into hell), then for forty days he delayed his departure before ascending to sit at the right hand of God. Did Jesus make a false promise?

76. In Person

Resurrection always applies to the body. The soul and spirit do not die, being immortal: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Fear Him rather who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"(MT 10:28; also see LK 8:55 and Rom 8:11). John also taught that "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is come in flesh is of God"(I Jn 4:2), "For many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in flesh. This is deceiver and antichrist"(II Jn 7). Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and others in person. He appeared to his disciples at least three times(JN 21:14). He told them to "Behold my hands and feet, that it is myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"(LK 24:39). He walked around, he felt hungry and ate, he cooked fish for them, and talked to them all in person. If it was all in person then he could not have escaped from behind the tomb stone nor appeared to his disciples behind closed doors. The only conclusion that we can make is that he did not die but was rescued. The rest is a myth.

77. Was It In Spirit?

Paul testifies "Resurrection will be transformation from physical to spiritual existence"(I Cor 15:51-53). "In the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life. And in the spirit he went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits"(I Pet 3:18,19). "If dead are not raised, it follows that Christ was not raised; and if Christ was not raised, your faith has nothing in it"(I Cor 15:16,17). According to these testimonies Jesus was raised only in spirit as the other dead would be raised in due course. That would give Jesus no particular precedence. Yet he did feel hurt, felt hungry and actually ate. This would contradict his "rising in the spirit". Since he did not die, he did not rise, forget about the faith.

78. Hypnotic Experience

It is sometimes stressed that the apostles may in fact be telling the truth when they talked of Jesus' resurrection. "In view of Jesus' powers of hypnosis, it is possible that he prepared his disciples for his resurrection using the technique that modern hypnotists call post-hypnotic suggestion. By this means he could have effectively conditioned them to hallucinate his appearances in response to certain pre-arranged cues (the breaking of the bread?), for a predetermined period after his death"(Ian Wilson, Jesus: The Evidence, Page 141). It is interesting that while Jesus had been imparting instructions to his disciples directly it is recorded in Acts(1:2,3) that after his resurrection "before he was taken up he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit(GNB), through the Holy Spirit/Ghost(KJV, NIV, NWT, RBV) to the men he had chosen as his Apostles. For forty days he appeared to them many times. Thus after his so-called "death and resurrection" he used the medium of the Holy Spirit, not his own person. This would tend to underline his appearance as something spiritual and not physical. If so for the dead Jesus, why not so for the LIVE Jesus? Thus it is possible that while Jesus was being taken to safety, the Apostles remained unaware of this and had hypnotic experiences of a Jesus "risen from the dead", an experience which only this close group may have had. Paul remains a doubtful candidate.

79. Hallucination

Psychologists have studied a closely related phenomenon known as collective delusion or mass hysteria. In this phenomenon "a significant part of the population of an area, which can be as small as a single building or as large as a nation, becomes convinced that some strange event is taking place for which there is no immediately obvious explanation sometimes paranormal causes are proposed and accepted"(Terrence Hines: Pseudoscience and Paranormal, Prometheus, Buffalo, N.Y., 1988, pp. 278-279). In our own times people have consistently reported seeing Unidentified Flying Objects(U.F.O.). Could it be that after imagining of things by Mary Magdalene; the "lady with the seven devils", others also started imagining things and the myth snowballed?

80. The Paraclete

If Jesus was to be followed by a "PARACLETE" [Translated: the COMFORTER (KJV, TLB); ADVOCATE (NEB); HELPER (NWT, NBV, GNB); COUNSELOR (NIV) (JN 14)] then there was no need for Jesus to return or for that matter "rise from the dead". Especially after demonstrating his resurrection he could have straightly ascended and not be lurking around for forty days during which he did nothing.

81. Bodily Ascension

Ascension of Jesus would be a necessary corollary to his rising from the dead. Once Jesus was brought back to life it was necessary to dispose him off. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"(I cor 15:50). The very idea of "ASCENSION" and "seating on the right side of God" would imply a fixed abode somewhere above the earth (which part?) for God and his "only begotten Son". This would imply limits to the presence of the Omnipresent God. If Jesus did not rise from the dead then there would have been no further need to ascend, bodily, unto heaven.

82. The Resurrection Experience

If "resurrection" means rising from the dead, then this experience is not exclusive to Jesus. Saints came out of the grave and went into the city at the time of Jesus' crucifixion(MT 27:52-53). Elijah(I Kg 17:17-24) and Elisha(II Kg 4:32-35) raised dead boys. A dead man came to life just by touching the dead bones of the prophet Elisha(II Kg 13:21). Ezekiel made dry bones to be covered by flesh and breathe(Eze, Ch.37). Peter and Paul, raised to life Docras (Acts 9:36-41) and Eutychas(Acts 20:9,10). Jesus himself raised to life a 12-year old girl(MT 9:23-25, MK 5:37-43), a young man(LK 7:12-15) as well as Lazarus(JN 11:43,44). Besides the miracle value of such resurrections, the experience of all those resurrected must have been similar to that of Jesus, if he did die on the Cross and was raised. Thus, Jesus' own experience, if at all, was nothing unique and cannot be made the basis of faith. If all the above-quoted persons did not really rise from the dead, if all these are tall tales, then could Jesus' own rising be not a similar fabrication?

83. The Uncorrupted Body

The Christians maintain that all those who were resurrected through miracles did after all die and on the other hand Jesus ascended to heaven and his body did not see any corruption. This argument overlooks the fact that, unless Jesus' earthly body was ethereal or an

illusion, it must eventually be disposed off, even if on Jesus' second return. That itself may be the reason for Jesus' second return if he must. The argument is therefore not tenable.

84. The Human Soul

Once Jesus acquired a human soul, which is acknowledged by the Christians to be undestructible, he became prisoner to the body and soul of his earthly life. He may be able to shed his body, but what about his soul? He did say "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit, and having said thus, he gave up the ghost"(LK 23:46). The whole episode smacks of paganism. [The Christian sect of Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the concept of "indestructible soul" or "hell" and heaven" inspite of the story of Lazarus (in paradise or as the NWT calls it the "Bosom of Abraham") and the rich man(in hell)(LK 16:22-25 as also MT 10:28, and LK 8:55, 23:43) wherein concepts of hell and paradise are indicated. This is an in-house problem of the Christians].

85. The Impossible

Tertulian writing about Jesus' crucifixion and ascension says: "it is certain because it is impossible"! What is said to have happened is indeed impossible. In our own analysis we have cast doubts about each and every aspect of the narration in the four Gospels. An event may be considered to have possibly happened if there is any reasonable chance of its happening. It has to be logical or at least in the realm of possibility. We may even give in to the possibility of a totally illogical miracle. Yet if something is presented which has the evidence against its happening, when the event itself is of doubtful nature, when it gives the appearance of having been concocted or tampered with, then the illogical is clearly not acceptable. The whole story of crucifixion to ascension not only baffles the mind, it makes the episode look like a fiction. We must thus conclude that it is impossible more so because the evidence is of doubtful nature.

86. The Incomplete God

There are unanswered dogmatic questions relating to finiteness of Jesus the man of flesh and blood who suffered and died, and the infiniteness of "God the Son", or Jesus the Divine. Notwithstanding this dual nature, there is this period of "three days" whence Jesus lay dead but was not yet in heaven, his promise to the crucified bandit notwithstanding. He was neither here nor there! Human mind is baffled by the possibility of the three-part God-head to be in an incomplete state during the period of Jesus' earthly sojourn and especially for those three days of uncertainty! It is rather distressing when Christian theologians state that Jesus was "down in hell" during those three days. If Jesus was the sinless one then he did not have to suffer the degradation of hell. If he did it in order to suffer for the sins of mankind then why his suffering on the Cross?

87. The Wages of Sin

If by his sacrifice on the Cross Jesus has already paid the wages of our sins then are we now free to do whatever our sinful nature may make us do?

THE EPILOGUE

We could go on and on with our analysis and arguments. The whole story is based on the accounts rendered by witnesses who could not be comfortably relied upon. The authors of various Gospels are unknown. Mark's original manuscript had been lost for a considerable period and its last passages are widely acknowledged to be later interpolations. Matthew copies a very large proportion of his Gospel from Mark but does not acknowledge the original source. Luke does the same "as one who has gone over the whole course of events in detail, have decided to write a connected narrative"(LK 1:3). John poses to be one of the original disciples who was close to Jesus but it is generally accepted that in fact it was an unknown author who used this name to provide a halo of authority to his writing. It is said that this name may have actually been assigned to the fourth Gospel by the Pauline Church sometimes after 180 C.E. He exaggerates. He dwells on his own doctrines. The four Gospels differ in many essential details. There are tell-tale marks of the finger-prints of history having been superimposed by personal likes and dislikes. They are "extraordinary jumble of contradictions puzzles, selectivities and hints that are left in the air"(Michael Grant: Saint Peter).

It could be contended that we are only finding fault with the narrative of the ancient writers of the Gospels who were writing for the simple people of their own times about an event which was very much fresh in the minds of the readers. This would be a too simplistic contention. A look at the Gospels and the letters of Paul and others and we can see that the writers were after all not so simplistic. They were writing with a religious zeal. If they were indeed rewriting whatever they had learned second hand and putting in their own ideas wherever it suited them, then they certainly did a masterly job. For centuries followers of their faith have not looked into what lay between the lines. If we find hidden skeletons between the lines then we are not to be blamed for. As for the freshness of the events, let us be content in reminding the readers that by the time these Gospels were written, far away from the places of occurrence, there was hardly anyone around who had even heard of these events even second or third hand. In those times of difficult communications truth was difficult to maintain, falsehood and myths spread easily.

It appears that "risen from the dead" was a myth or an invention of the disciples who were perhaps accomplices to the later, if not the earlier, part of the conspiracy to save Jesus after he had been successfully rescued by the efforts of Joseph and Nicodemus possibly in league with Pilate Pontius, the Roman Governor. If Matthew's information is correct then Jews were already anticipating all this. Fortunately things did not go as far as Jesus' death. Jesus was taken off the cross while he was still ALIVE. By the time Jesus was safe it was too late, and of no further consequence, to retract the story. Perhaps the whole thing was a misconception. The rest is a myth which developed initially to create a smoke screen around his disappearance, and later was tinged with paganistic beliefs of the Gentiles.

In an era of angels descending, Holy Ghost coming down as a dove, demons abounding, thousand of pigs with demon spirits plunging to their death, saints rising from the graves and entering the city, people disappearing in thin air and reappearing behind closed doors, "risen from the dead" could have been just another "miracle". After the death of John the Baptist Prince Herod heard of Jesus' miraculous powers "and did not know what to make of it; for some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, others again that one of the old prophets had come back to life. Herod said, As for John I beheaded him myself; and who is this I hear such talk about?"(LK 9:9). Mark(6:16) is more specific" This is John, whom I beheaded, raised from the dead". Matthew(14:2) is even more straightforward:

"This is John the Baptist, he said to his attendants; John has been raised to life and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him". Could this be the reason he refused to crucify or stone to death Jesus when Pilate referred the matter to him?

Jesus himself had declared "John is the destined Elijah"(MT 11:14; 17:11-13) perhaps thereby implying or at least his disciples so interpreting that Elijah had returned (been raised!) in the person of John to herald the restoration of the glory of Israel. There was widespread belief among the followers of John that he had already risen. Now it was Jesus' own turn to die, to be raised, to be lifted and to return in his second coming to complete the task— introduction of the kingdom of Heaven — that he will be leaving behind incomplete.

To add to the confusion of the Gospels are Paul's own epistles. In fact these were written even before the Gospels and must have confounded the Gospel writers themselves, whoever they were, in writing what they did. His source? "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ"(Gal 1:12). When Paul was accused of falsifying church teachings he wrote; "If the truth of God brings him all the greater honour because of my falsehood, why should I any longer be condemned as a sinner?"(Rom 3:7).

Paul and his creed so overshadowed the original teachings of Jesus that he fell apart with those who had been near to Jesus and who would not approve his teachings to the Gentiles and rejection of the "Law". Having portrayed the disciples as simpletons and lacking even commonsense all their teachings and writings were obliterated by religious zealots once Christianity/Paulism became a state religion. Documents with any different outlook or having anything contrary to Pauline creed were hunted down and burnt. What has been passed on to the posterity as the books of the New Testament is a deliberately selected set of documents, clearly adhering to the Pauline creed. These are full of distortions, contradictions, interpolations and sometimes even pure fiction. Today we do not know how Jesus looked like, what were his personal habits and what he really taught. Such evidence cannot stand before an impartial jury.

Jesus said, "Take care that no one misleads you. Many will come claiming my name, and saying, I am he, and many will be misled by them"(MK 13:5-6, MT 24:4-6, LK 21:8). "Where the corpse is the vulture will gather"(MT 24:24; LK 17:37). Except in this case the corpse was imaginary and yet a mighty fabrication has caused many to be misled. The whole story being doubtful and questionable at every step, we can only conclude that Jesus did not die on the Cross. The rest is a myth.

Having concluded our arguments the Christian might pose the question: If Jesus did not die on the Cross and was eventually saved and whisked away then why is it that we do not hear about him or his later teachings any more? This is a question that in fact could be answered by a counter question: Why is it that history does not say anything about Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and others? John, the beloved disciple, in whose care Jesus was supposed to have left his mother, wrote, or is supposed to have written, one of the Gospels, and the Book of Revelation, and whose three letters are also included in the New Testament, does not even mention her name in his writings after the crucifixion! Did she and the "women" stay back in Jerusalem after receiving the Holy Ghost at the Pentecost. [We may wonder why the Holy Ghost that Mary had already received before Jesus' birth(LK 1:35) would not suffice and if she indeed was again with the Holy Ghost at the Pentecost!]. It is said that Peter and Paul were executed in Rome. No one can say for sure when and how it really happened. Why is it that the identity of such an important location as that of the Holy Sepulchre remained unknown and forgotten until "discovered" by (St.) Helena, the mother of (St.) Constantine the Great in the fourth century C.E.? There is said to be the

tomb of Virgin Mary in Jerusalem according to "tradition". Why was she buried in a tomb and not the sepulchre in which Jesus had been buried? Why then there is another tomb of her in Ephesus?

As for Jesus, it is perplexing that history itself records very little even about his life before the Cross at Calvary. The Gospels tell us precious little about his physical features, his living habits, his human likes and dislike and other personal characteristics. This is understandable in view of the calamitous period that followed not much later. The Jewish revolt, its suppression and massacre of hundreds of thousands in Jerusalem, Judaea, and even in Galilee totally destroyed the records and witnesses that could testify to his existence let alone his teachings or the story of his life.

Besides precious little that we come to know about Jesus from leftover Christian documents, there is very little we can learn about him from contemporary historical sources. It is striking that so little is available to us from non-Christian sources of Jesus' times. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish historian who was born about 30 B.C.E. and died some 35 years after the birth of Jesus, does not make even a single reference to Jesus. The Jewish historian Josephus who died toward the end of the first century C.E. mentions at least twelve persons by the name of Jesus but these do not include the Jesus of Nazareth. Bishop Clement of Alexandria and Tertulian have particularly noted this omission. Mention of the name of Jesus of Nazareth in some of the manuscripts of "ANTIQUITIES" written by Josephus are now accepted to be manifest forgeries. Justus of Tiberias who was born in Galilee at the stated time of crucifixion took a leading part in the Jewish revolt against Rome. In his two monumental works, one on the revolt and the other on history from Moses to Agrippa (who died circa 100 C.E.) he makes no mention of any man named Jesus of Nazareth. Paul himself, while living in Jerusalem at the time of crucifixion never met Jesus and apparently did not even hear about him. This could be understandable since Jesus was a rather unknown Galilean in the religious circle of Jerusalem. In spite of his reported miracles, many of which may have had their origin in later myths and therefore not known to the contemporary people, all that may have been known to some of the people must be that he was a sort of miracle worker not much different from other miracle workers and sorcerers who abounded in those times a penny a dozen. Some of the disciples of Jesus had also been performing such miracles. (MT 10:1; LK 9:49, 10:17; Acts 3:6, 22, 9:40, 13:6, 14:11, 19:13, etc.). Even after Paul's preaching very few at high places knew little, if any, about Jesus. We have the case of Paul himself being explained by Porcius Festus the Roman Governor of Caesarea to the visiting King Agrippa 1: "they merely had certain points of disagreement with him about their peculiar religion, and about someone called Jesus, a dead man whom Paul alleged to be alive" (Acts 25:19). This further underlines the fact that Jesus was not so widely known as the Gospels project him to be. At least we do not have independent records to vouch for that.

Similarly, we know almost nothing about Jesus from Roman/pagan sources such as Celsus, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, or Tacitus. History seems to have been ignorant about Jesus. This has made many scholars to doubt if Jesus did indeed exist. Whether or not there ever was a record, historical or religious, about Jesus' post-Calvary part of life seems to have been lost like that of a large number of other prophets even of the Old Testament times. The upheaval caused by the Jewish revolt and later Christian efforts to suppress, rather destroy, all literature contrary to the Pauline doctrine, may have contributed to this loss. In Jewish literature of a later period, however, there is mention of Jesus and that too in a derogatory manner in order to ridicule and discredit Jesus as a preposterous pretender and an imposter. Powerful vested interests have clouded the whole issue and seen to it that the truth is effectively curbed.

Our examination was directed to the question whether Jesus, really and truly, died on the Cross. The burden of proof was on the evidence of the Gospels. Our analysis has exposed the weaknesses of this evidence at every step to the detriment of the concept of "the risen Jesus". Since it is not proved that Jesus died on the Cross, the question of his rising from the dead and ascension to heaven does not arise at least on the basis of this evidence.

Interestingly, even if Jesus did rise from the dead, (so did Lazarus and the saints) and ascend to heaven (so did Elijah) this would not prove that he was God, or even a third of it. That is a different subject to be dealt with later.

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CHAPTER XI

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

In order to understand the message of Jesus it is important to understand as to who were the people who were the witnesses to the story of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension. What were the kind of people who are supposed to have conveyed to posterity about what Jesus said or did?

GATHERING OF THE TWELVE

"Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straight way they forsook their nets, and followed. He had gone a little further thence, he saw James, the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after him" (MK 1:16-20). Matthew tells a similar story.

Luke gives some details: "And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gen-nes-a-ret. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he left speaking he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake, And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ship, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him" (LK 5:1-11). Luke does not mention here Andrew, brother of Simon Peter but later includes him among the Twelve.

The Gospel-writer John gives us an entirely different version. According to him when John the Baptist looked at Jesus and told two of his disciples "Behold the Lamb of God! and the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, what seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Mes-si-as, which is being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus And when Jesus beheld him, he said, thou art Simon the Son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone" (JN 1:36-42).

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Beth-Saida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith to him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knoweth thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (JN 1:43-49). It is most intriguing that without knowing much about Jesus beyond what he had learned within the past few moments Nathanael called him "Son of God" and "King of Israel, the titles which carry many implications beyond the genius of this simpleton fisherman. [Also see Chapter XIII]. John does not mention James and John, sons of Zebedee in this episode.

"And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the Son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him" (MK 2:14; LK 5:27-28). Mark gives his list of the disciples as: "Simon, he surnamed Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is The Sons of Thunder. And Andrew and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thad-daeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him" (MK 3:16-19).

Matthew provides his list of the Twelve thus: "first Simon also called Peter and his brother Andrew; James, son of Zebedee and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax-gatherer, James son of Alphaeus, Labbaeus, Simon, a member of the Zealot party, and Judas Iscariot the man who betrayed him" (MT 10:2-4).

Luke underlines the fact of Jesus having a large body of disciple: "He called his disciples to him and from among them he chose Twelve and named them Apostles: Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who turned traitor" (LK 6:13-16).

It is rather surprising that John does not care to name even the "Twelve" who are supposed to be nearest to Jesus, went around with him, and, most especially, were the witnesses to his "resurrection".

What is perplexing is that there are differences and doubts even in this small list:

MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
Simon	Simon	Simon	Simon
Andrew	Andrew	Andrew	Andrew
James (Zebedee)	James	James	-
John (Zebedee)	John	John	-
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
-	-	-	Nathanael
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	-
Thomas (Didymus)	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas
Matthew	Matthew	Matthew	-
James (Alphaeus)	James (Alphaeus)	James (Alphaeus)	-
Thaddaeus	-	-	-
-	Labbaeus	-	-
Simon (the Canaanite)	Simon (the Zealot)	Simon (the Zealot)	-
-	-	Judas son of James	-
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

Thus Mark, Matthew and Luke each list Twelve names, however differently, but John lists only five. There is confusion about some of the names and especially about Levi son of Alphaeus the tax gatherer (MK 2:14, LK 5:27:28).

Peter: Simon bar Jona, or Simon son of Jona, is the most famous of all the disciples; one of the reasons may be his association at least for a while with Paul. The Gospels talk about him the most, as Jesus nicknamed him Cephas, a stone/rock. Translated into Greek as PETROS it became Bulros in Arabic and PETER in English and this is the name most people know him by. He was a fisherman by profession, and came from Beth-Saida on the shores of Lake Galilee. Throughout the Gospels, Peter is shown as if he was the leader and spokesman of "the Twelve", Peter's honoured position comes out most clearly from two incidents, First, when Peter confessed Jesus to be Christ and Jesus said "Good for you, Simon bar Jona, for this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven. And so I tell you Peter: you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church" (MT 16:17-18). [what a shaky rock on which Jesus expected to build his "church"! Whether or not Jesus ever thought of building his own "church" is a different question]. According to John the nickname, CEPHAS, was given the very first time Jesus saw Peter but the synoptic Gospels put it later at this particular point in the ministry. Second, when Peter, James and John saw the transfiguration (MK 9:2-13; MT 17:1-13; LK 9:28-36) of Jesus into a shining body and appearance of Moses and Elijah. This baffled Peter so much that he immediately offers to put up three tents for those three which shows his simple mind.

Peter also makes several silly remarks so that Jesus had to rebuke him: "Get away from me Satan; your thoughts don't come from God but from man" (MK 8:33; MT 16:22,23). Peter was with Jesus at the "Last Supper" and later in the garden of Gethsemane but deserted him along with others at the moment of danger. Yet among all the major disciples he was the only one who followed Jesus to the High Priest's court albeit discreetly and where, as prophesied by Jesus, Peter denied knowing Jesus. He is supposed to be a witness to Jesus' "resurrection". Among the twelve Apostles his missionary work is the only one highlighted in the Acts.

Paul somehow convinced this simple fisherman about conversion of the Gentiles but it seems that Peter later on recoiled from this and they fell off with each other. There are no reliable records but it is generally said that Peter and Paul were present in Rome at the same time. Paul was writing his letters to the Colossians and to Philemon. Peter is said to be assisting John Mark in writing his Gospel. But this is generally considered not to be true. During all this time Peter and Paul are known not to have met. According to tradition Peter and Paul may have been killed by Nero on the same day. According to the Church tradition Peter preferred not to be crucified in upright position as was his "Master" Jesus and was therefore crucified upside down. Romans had no cause to entertain any such request. Nothing, however, is certain and in fact this story may be a mere myth.

Andrew: Very little is known about Andrew besides that he was the brother of Peter and stayed close to Jesus during his missionary days.

James and John, Sons of Zebedee: They held important place after Peter and are supposed to be present at transfiguration. Jesus "surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The Sons of Thunder" (MK 3:17). This may be due to their being fiery in temper. An example of this is given in Luke's Gospel: "And when his disciples James and John saw this they said, wilt thou that we

command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (LK 9:54). This was uttered when the Samaritans refused to allow Jesus into their town.

They were simpletons, or are so depicted in the Gospels. Their famous episode is the one when they asked Jesus to give them places on his right and left on his throne in heaven while Jesus was talking of his suffering and crucifixion: "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master. ... Grant unto us that we sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask for" (MK 10:37-39). However, Matthew (20:20) tells us that the request was actually made by their mother in their behalf.

In the post-"resurrection" period, James was beheaded by King Herod (Acts 12:1-2). John who later went to Rome was banished to Ephesus and is credited with writing the Gospel that bears his name. He could, therefore, be "the disciple whom Jesus loved" as per Church tradition. Some consider that the other disciple, who is not named, who was with Andrew when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God (JN 1:37,40) may have been John the disciple whom Jesus loved. John Zebedee is also known as John the Evangelist and also the Divine on account of his supposed writing of the Gospel of John. However, very few believe that this Galilean fisherman could be the writer of the Gospel named as "according to John the Book of Revelation and three Epistles as well as being well connected and having access to the household of the High Priest (JN 18:16). He was supposed to have to wait till the return of Jesus, but died in Ephesus at an advanced age without seeing the return of Jesus. If he is not the beloved disciple then nothing notable is known about him. [Also see Chapter XIII for a variant view about "the disciple whom Jesus loved"].

Levi: Mark reports of a Levi son of Alphaeus, the tax-gatherer, or publican. Luke mentions a Levi, the tax-gatherer, but does not say that he was the son of Alphaeus. Instead, he mentions a James son of Alphaeus who is also mentioned by Matthew. However, both Mark and Luke exclude Levi from their lists of Apostles. Could he be one of the Twelve mentioned by them, say James son of Alphaeus? Could he be Labbaeus/Thaddaeus?

Matthew: The tax-gatherer's name given by Matthew is Matthew, possibly himself, if he really wrote the Gospel ascribed to him. Could it be that Levi is really Matthew because Luke also includes a certain Matthew, a tax-gatherer like Levi?

Labbaeus/Thaddaeus: Not much is known about him/them beyond the names Labbaeus appearing in Matthew's list and Thaddaeus as given in Mark's list. Could he, or one of them, be Levi?

Judas, the Son of James: King James Version records him "brother of James" but modern translations (RBV, NIV, NWT, GNB) all list him as "son" of James (LK 6:16). TJB includes him as "son of James" with a footnote: "possibly brother of James". Which James he really was? We do not know. Could he be Saint Jude? [See later in this chapter].

Thomas: We know precious little about him. He is the one who expressed doubt about Jesus' "resurrection". He is known as Didymus or "Twin" but there is no information about who was his twin brother/sister. Perhaps he is known as the Twin because of his doubting nature or "twin minds". [This has given rise to the term "Doubting Thomas"] Some assert that he was a twin of

Jesus. May be he was called Jesus' twin because of his remarkable resemblance to Jesus. [Also see Chapter X].

Simon the Zealot: KJV lists him as Simon the Canaanite; GNB puts him as Simon the Patriot; NEB says he was "member of the Zealot party", in NWT he is shown as Cana-naean; NIV says he was the Zealot; RBV says he was "Simon of Cana". RSV tells us he was "Simon who was called Zealot"(MK 3:18). Most likely KJV mis-translated Cana-naean into Canaanite. Being from Cana-in-Galilee he was thus a Galilean. It is believed that he had joined Jesus' group hoping that someday the Messiah will fulfill the hope of Israel and he did not want to be left out of action.

Judas Iscariot: He is the one "who betrayed him"(MT 10:4). There are several theories about his origin. Some consider that the word ISCARIOT means the "man from KERIOTH", a city in Judaea proper. This will then make him the only non-Galilean of the Twelve. This does, however, not have any other evidence from the Gospels. Some consider that the word Iscariot may in fact be "Sicariot", a member of the "SICARII" or the Assassins, the terrorist wing of the Zealot party. This leads some to theorise that unlike Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot the Terrorist Zealot, could not stand Jesus' apparent pacifism and hoped that by getting him arrested he might provoke Jesus into insurrection to fulfill his expected role of the Messiah.

Philips: There is hardly anything we know about Philip. After "resurrection" of Jesus he is shown to be performing some missionary work with great signs and miracles(Acts Ch.8) and it is here that he converts an Ethiopian eunuch a high official of Ethiopia. He was elected for dealing with the communal affairs(Acts Ch. 6). However, we are not sure if the above description is for Philip the Apostle or someone else also named Philip.

Bartholomew: Precious little is known about him. His name is a patronymic: Son of Tolmai. Could he be Levi?

Nathanael: He is supposed to be from Cana-in-Galilee(JN 21:2) and is considered to be among the earliest disciples who was also present by the Sea of Tiberias when Jesus appeared to him, Peter, and Thomas the Twin(Didymus) before ascension. Yet none of the Synoptic Gospels include his name among the TWELVE. Could he be Simon the Zealot?

The Doubtful Twelve: These disciples were the supporters of Jesus' mission and his constant companions and main witnesses to the whole story of his life, death and resurrection. The Gospels paint a very grim picture of these disciples. "Even though Jesus spoke in parables to others, to his own disciples he explained everything"(MK 4:34). Yet the various discourses that Jesus gave them all seem to have fallen on deaf ears, or rather hit against blank walls. They were unable to apprehend his messages: "they understood none of these things....neither knew they the things which were spoken"(LK 38:34). It looks as if Jesus had said: "seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand"(MT 13:13) not only for the crowds that came to him but for his own closest disciples as well.

While Jesus was talking of his suffering James and John, sons of Zebedee, were concerned for their own place in his glory. At the darkest hour of his imminent danger these disciples fell asleep. They could not keep awake even one hour. Jesus exhorted them to "watch and pray", yet

"they would not for their eyes were heavy"(MK 26:38-45). When faced with real danger "all the disciples forsook him, and fled"(MK 14Z:50; MT 26:56) leaving their Lord, Master and Saviour in the hands of his mortal enemies. Jesus said "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven"(MT 10:33). Yet Peter, the Rock, three times (or was it six?) denied having any association with his Master to save his own skin. They were so afraid of their own lives that they could not dare to be present even at his crucifixion. They are repeatedly presented by the Gospels as contemptible, bemused, confused, bewildered, frightened simpletons. One of them even betrayed him.

Such were the disciples of Jesus — or so would Paul and his followers have us believe. According to them these "pillars of society" left their Master and had no right to Apostleship. At least that is the impression we get. Could we trust these simple fishermen and the like to correctly convey what they saw and heard but did not understand? We know precious little about most of these disciples who belonged to the inner circle of the followers of Jesus. Could their testimony be relied upon especially when it comes to us through a great number of intermediaries, translations and purposive selections?

If the disciples were really as portrayed then they are not worthy of our trust in such an important matter as Faith. If they have been wrongly portrayed then could we trust the Gospels who portray such a false picture of Jesus' close companions, with apparent ulterior motives? If so with the disciples, we would be still more hesitant to accept any of the doctrines that are conveyed to us by such writers who do not give us even a coherent list of the twelve most trusted disciples of Jesus?

Barnabas: He is not listed among the Twelve but figures prominently in missionary activities alongwith Paul in his early work. He is the one who introduced Paul to the Apostles and was responsible for his being accepted. His own name was "Joseph, surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means 'Son of Exhortation'), a Levite, by birth a Cypriot, owned an estate, which he sold; he brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet"(Acts 4:36-37).

James, the Just: He is said to be Jesus' brother and was the head of church at Jerusalem after Jesus' "ascension". He was not one of the "Twelve" and was initially a non-believer, was not present at the Last Supper or even at the site of Jesus' crucifixion where Virgin Mary is said to be present so that Jesus had to leave Mary in the custody of "the beloved disciple". None of the Gospels show him to be around when a number of disciples are stated to be having a vision of the "resurrected" Jesus. However, Paul lists him among the witnesses to resurrection(1 Cor 15:7). How and when he was converted, or whether he needed to be converted, is not known.

The political leanings of James are not generally known. However, Hegisippus, a travelling story collector around 160 C.E, records that James prayed in the Temple for the salvation of the state of Israel until his knees grew as hard as camel's knees. This would make him at least a pro-Zealot.

James is described as a peace maker, a compromiser, a smoother-over, a patcher-up of quarrels, a reconciliator(Acts 15). In the only book of the New Testament attributed to him he never even alludes to Jesus' miraculous birth nor the circumstances of his death, resurrection or the gift of salvation. We have no knowledge as to how and why he obtained this position over the heads of Jesus' "Chosen" Apostles. He was stoned to death in 62 C.E.

In the new Testament the authorship of one of the books, An Epistle of James, is attributed to James the Just which he addresses "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad". This address is rather intriguing since by the time of James' death the Jewish revolt

had not yet started and all the twelve tribes had not yet scattered abroad, In this Epistle the audience is urged to "be perfect, wanting nothing"(1:4), "slow to wrath"(1:19) "love thy neighbor as thyself"(2:8), "not to judge others"(4:11), and "swear not"(5:12) — the very themes that Jesus had been talking about. Yet he does not link his own teaching to "the Lord's" as if these were not parallel [Some of the later epistle writers also show similar ignorance]. This would hardly be expected of Jesus' own brother who took control of the newly formed Church/sect. It is speculated that the Epistle was actually written by an unknown author long after James' death and his authorship to this Epistle was actually assigned in the third century C.E. as in the case of the Gospels and some other books of the New Testament.

It is also likely that James was in fact not one of Jesus' own brothers. In MT(28:10) after his "resurrection" Jesus tells Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary" to "Go tell my brethren that they go to Galilee, and there they shall see me". Also in JN(20:17) he asks Mary Magdalene to "Go tell my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father". Overlooking the contradictions in Jesus' immediate destination, it is intriguing who these "brethren" really were especially because this word "brethren" is not used in this fashion any where else in these two Gospels. Paul attests: "I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother"(Gal 1:19). Which James does he refer to?— James the brother of Jesus, or James the disciple/apostle of the Lord? He also mentions certain "brethren of the Lord"(I Cor 9:5) to indicate an inner circle of disciples. In I Cor (1:11–13) Paul complains of Christians who call themselves "of Paul", "of Apollo's", "of Cephas", and significantly "of Christ". Could there be a group called "the brethren of the Lord"? If so, it is likely that James (the Just) was actually the head of this group in Jerusalem aside from Peter and other apostles.

THE APOSTLES AT JERUSALEM

Without the narrative by Luke in the book of Acts we would remain in doubt as to from which place did Jesus "ascend", if he indeed did ascend. Luke insists that the disciples did not go to Galilee but stayed in Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded them: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem"(LK 24:49). In the book of Acts we are told by Luke that after he was lifted up, "from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey"(Acts 1:12) the disciples came back to Jerusalem and stayed there and "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren"(Acts 1:14). The number of disciples is stated to be one hundred and twenty(Acts 1:15).

After some time Peter suggested that in order to complete the number twelve they elect someone else in place of the traitor Judas Iscariot "that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship"(Acts 1:25). Names of Joseph called Barsabbas, surnamed Justus, and Matthias were suggested and the lot fell upon Matthias.

Apparently there was no persecution of Jesus' followers soon after "crucifixion". The disciples kept meeting and even went to the temple when they wanted to. It seems that like the followers of John the Baptist they too were treated as an odd cult and not interfered with. On the day of the Pentecost when they were together "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterances. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noise abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own tongue"(Acts 2:2-6).

This was the start, it seems, of their active preaching in public. It is evident that even after this episode the disciples kept going to the temple. At one occasion when Peter and John went there for prayers a lame man was cured by Peter at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple and this started worrying the temple authorities. Peter and John were apprehended and they "put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide"(Acts 4:3). The number of disciples had by now grown to about five thousand(Acts 4:4). The next day they were brought before a Council of "rulers, and elders and scribes, and Ananas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what powers, or by what name, have ye done this?"(Acts 4:3-7). Peter gives a talk about resurrection of Jesus. "When they had commanded them to go aside out of the Council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus"(Acts 4:15-18). Evidently whatever odd or wrong they were teaching about Jesus did not amount to blasphemy. So, they let them go finding nothing how they might punish them. The Apostles, however, did not take heed and kept meeting in Solomon's Portico. No one from outside their own group dared to join them, although people generally spoke highly of them and believers were the more added to the Lord(Acts 5:12-14). This is Luke's subtle way of saying that not many people were joining them. Their continued defiance again brought them in conflict with the Sanhedrin and they put them in prison. "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth. The Apostles were rearrested next day, flogged and let off with a warning. But the Apostles continued to go "daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to preach Jesus Christ"(Acts 5:42).

It is interesting how Peter and John were let off first with just a warning and then with a mere flogging when they were openly preaching the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus was being called Son of God, then, the Council saw nothing odd about it. This confirms our earlier conclusion that Jesus was not tried for calling himself, if he did, as Son of God in terms of the Christian belief, but for fear that he might lead an insurrection. The peculiar twist to the meaning of Son of God was in fact given by Paul and even then a limited one: "He was declared Son of God by a mighty act in that he rose from the dead"(Rom 1:4). The myth snowballed under favourable pagan environment.

The number of disciples kept increasing slowly but surely and this led to their persecution and Stephen, one of the organisers of the group of believers was arrested for "this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law"(Acts 6:13) [—not for preaching about Jesus!]. "And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul(Acts 7:58). Thus enters Paul in the picture! After Paul's conversion, the Apostles assigned Barnabas to accompany Paul.

Details of further activities of the Apostles are not available to us. Somewhere in time James, brother to Jesus, became head of the Church. James had been doubting Jesus: "for neither did his brethren believe in him"(JN 7:5). Apparently he was one of those who were meeting together the same evening Jesus "ascended" (Acts 1:14). On Paul's testimony(1 Cor 15:7) we may assume that James also may have been a witness to resurrection although none of the Gospels tell us that. There is also a likelihood that Paul was only confusing names and the actual witness may have been James son of Zebedee. However, this particular James is usually mentioned with the name of his father and, therefore, we can take it that Paul was indeed

referring to James the brother of Jesus. How James became more prominent than the appointed Apostles, especially Peter the Rock, is not clear.

After Paul made himself into a self-styled Apostle to the Gentiles there were considerable difficulties within the infant sect: "And certain men which came down to Antioch from Judaea...said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved"(Acts 15:1). Peter had been enticed by Paul to accept his view but Peter later retracted and therefore "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed"(Gal 2:11).

The dispute became so intense that the "Christians" at Antioch "determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question"(Acts 15:2). The meeting is called the Council of Jerusalem which is supposed to have taken place in 48 C.E. Apparently James took the extreme Mosaic position while Paul took the extreme anti-Mosaic position. The parent group thought they were like other Jews while also believing in Jesus' resurrection. Paul advocated that "We are discharged from the law"(Rom 7:6). He insisted that the Law did not apply at least to the Gentiles. Peter, it seems, stood for a compromise, or so it is recorded in the Acts: "Why do you now provoke God by laying on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? No, we believe that it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, and so are they"(Acts 15:10-11).

James summed up the agreement that ensued: "We trouble not them, which from the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood"(Acts 15:19-20). "If you keep yourself from these things you will be doing right"(Acts 15:29). These were the conditions to admit Gentiles as "honorary" Christians. That this was a very special concession only for the Gentile is evident: "James, Cephas(Peter), and John...gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowships; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision"(Gal 2:9). Having received such a certification Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch. Paul was, however, not very happy and wanted to go all the way for himself. He had no further need for Barnabas who it seems was not in full agreement with him, and they broke away. There is no further mention of Barnabas in the New Testament after this time.

After his long missionary journey without Barnabas, Paul once again went to Jerusalem and called on James who asked him: "It is said that you teach all the Jews who live in the Gentile lands to forsake Moses saying they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs"(Acts 21:21). They asked him to purify himself in the Temple and showed him four other men who were to do the same. "Then Paul took the men and next day purifying with them entered into the Temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for everyone of them"(Acts 21:26). Thus once again he tried to gain acceptance from James and his group by false pretense. But some Jews from Asia recognised him and there was considerable trouble which finally led to his arrest, trial, and flogging and may have been treated worse except that he took advantage of his Roman citizenship by declaring it to the arresting Roman officer(Acts 22:25). The story is of no immediate relevance to us any further.

In Jerusalem James and his group now called the NAZOREANS adhered to their principles and their number kept increasing steadily. However, they were soon in trouble especially with the Zealots who advocated armed struggle while James and his group were manifestly pacifists. According to the Jewish historian Josephas, when the Roman procurator

was transferred and before the arrival of the next one, Ananas II arrested James and had him stoned to death in 62 C.E.

In the New Testament there is a letter which is supposed to have been written by James but its authorship remains doubtful especially on account of its polished Greek hardly expected of an unlettered Galilean. If it was indeed written by James then it may have been written before 62 C.E. Since it is addressed to "the twelve tribes". It is considered that it could then be written before 48 C.E. that is before the Council of Jerusalem because it does not include Gentiles as its audience.

From all available evidence we learn that the original disciples of Jesus and the Apostles at Jerusalem kept preaching to the Jews only. The only exception seems to be the Samaritans, who were anyway a sort of distant cousins to the Jews, being what we may call non-conformist Jews. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles he did.....Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John"(Acts 8: 5,6,14). Samaritans were after all returning to the fold of Judaism.

"This Doctrine [of the return of Christ] was taught by the consent of the most eminent Fathers of the first Century without any opposition from their contemporaries, and was delivered by them not as Doctors, but Witnesses; not as their own opinion, but as Apostolic Tradition: it was certainly the most prevailing Argument in the Conversion of the Jews, who, by the Death of Christ upon the Cross, having lost all hopes that the glorious predictions of their Prophets concerning the Reign of the Messiah should be accomplished under him, were, upon the information they had of his miraculous Resurrection and Ascention, easily cajoled with the hopes of his second coming to reign over them and fulfill the Prophecies; neither was there any difficulty in this belief, their minds being prepared for it by the like expectations they had already entertained of the second coming of Moses and Elias. As to the subordinate doctrinals, they were no other than these, that the Messiah being already come, and since his ascention being upon his return, in order to the recollection of Israel, the re-establishing of that Kingdom, and uniting of all nations under one Scepter(a scepter of righteousness and truth), that all persons ought to prepare themselves for this holy kingdom of the Messiah, and of Heaven, and to relinquish all idolatry and wickedness, to repent of their sins unfeignedly, and to submit to those laws, under the obedience whereof God had concluded mankind, tho' in sundry manners.

"Amongst the Jews there we find this distinction that some of them being entire Proselytes, but not understanding Hebrew nor reverencing that holy language so much as the originary Jews, they spoke Greek, and used the Septuagint in their Synagogues; these were the Grecians spoken of(Acts xi. 20), as Salmasius well observes, and such were the churches in Jerusalem, to whom the Apostles appointed Deacons, all Proselytes of them that preached to the Gentiles, some taught them the necessity of Circumcision, and becoming entire Prosclites. Thus did Peter(Gal. ii. 14) and other(Acts XV. 1). And even Paul circumcised Timothy, tho' the son of a Gentile Father(Acts XVI. 3). Sixteen Bishops of Jerusalem were successively circumcised, saith Sulpitius Severus; and their names are mentioned by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History(I. 4.C.5), and even those who derived their Pedigree so as to shew they were of the Kindred of Christ called Deposyn were alwaies of the circumcision, as Eusebius also tells us (I. 1.7), from hence we may frame to ourselves a prospect of the primitive Judaizing Church, since it is certain that they were zealous as to the Mosaical Law(Acts XXI. 20), and lived in a perfect conformity to the legal Rites. It is not to be doubted but their religion and doctrinals varied much from ours, such a Sacrament as we make; Baptism to be (sure) they had

none, the Jewish Baptism extending only to Proselytes when newly made, and their present family, not successive posterity: except we take it in a general sense for washing, as Luc. XI. 38, and so they might baptize either arbitrarily upon some great occasion, as at the preaching of John, or out of respect to legal or superstitious Pharisaical uncleanness, and to this alludes the Apostle when he tells the Hebrews of the Doctrine of Baptisms (Heb. VI. 2). They that were circumcised resorted at usual times to the public Temple Service (Acts III. 1 & 13, 14); they paid vows, offered sacrifices, and walked orderly, keeping the law, and yet were believers (Acts XXI. 20, 23, 24), and there is not any sign that they were separated from the other Jews, or were accounted Heretics upon any other account than that they held Jesus to be the Messiah and taught in his name (Acts IV. 17, 18). As to the other Sacrament of the Lord's supper, neither did they use that otherwise than as Christ had done, as a Judicial rite used either at the Passover, or constantly at Meals, the cup of blessing being then distributed by the master of the household, and the bread broken and distributed. The use of red wine, the breaking of the bread formally, and the distributing of it; the very names and rites are the same which were usuals among the Jews; nor was this ever done in the Jewish Synagogues, but at home, and, so this recorded, they continued daily in the Temple, and breaking bread at their own houses, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts II. 46). This very probable that they added to the usual benediction of the bread and wine some commemorations in honour of the Messiah, which was no innovation or schismatical act, since every Rabbi might enlarge the Synagogue worship or private devotion of his Disciples in that manner, and it was usual for them so to do, wherefore this could give no Distaste. And if we believe that they imitated Christ in the celebration of his last supper, as that we may (for what was received of the Lord was delivered unto them, (I Cor. XI. 23), we must believe that all the Ceremonies of the Jews were entirely retained by them at such times, seeing that in the Evangelists we find nothing done in the Lord's supper but what the Jewish Rituals prescribe.

"But that they did never believe Christ to be the natural Son of God, by eternal generation, or any tenet depending thereon, or prayed unto him, or believed the Holy Ghost, or the Trinity of persons in one Deity, is as evident as this that the Jews and they did expect no such Messiah, and the introducing such doctrines would have been capital among them as tending to Blasphemy and Polytheism. It was Blasphemy adjudged in Christ to say that he should sit at the right hand of Power, that power being esteemed an incommunicable attribute of God, and so suffered Stephen (Acts VII. 56, 57). Nor did Jesus, upon the adjuration of Caiphas, say that he was Christ the Son of God (Math. 26:63). And albeit it is manifest that the appellation of son of God was not unusual among the Jews so as that they bestowed it on Men, yet did they not import thereby any real divinity in the person (nor did Caiphas in his adjuration mean so), but an extraordinary perfection lodged in Humanity and Hyperbolically expressed.

"Neither is it to be believed that they were of opinion that the death of Christ had put an end to the ceremonial law as consisting of types and fading shadows, since they obstinately retained them so long after, and which is most considerable. During this time they were instructed and governed by the Apostles and their immediate successors. Such was the condition of the Judaizing Christians, amongst which it is further remarkable that as the originary Jews did use the Hebrew Bible in their Synagogues, however that they expounded it in Syriac and Chaldee.

"We find by the history of this Council that those which were for imposing the burden of the Mosaic law upon the Gentile converts were of the sect of the Pharisees which believed (Acts 15:5). Hence it appears that those of that sect which entertained the Doctrine of the Messiah, and so became Christians, did still retain their Zeal for the Law, and the

opinions and Traditions of their sect, together with the doctrine of Christ, yet were not looked upon us Heretics, albeit it were true that Ebion and Cerinthus were the persons that first raised the Scruple: for it is certain they which held that opinion were then in good esteem with the Church, and were a part of that Apostolical Synod. There were also of the Sadducees which professed Christianity, and believed Jesus to be the Messiah, yet denied the resurrection. Of such doth Justin Martyr speak, in his Dialogue with Tryphon the Jew, where he reckons up as a third part of Christendom those which were called Christians yet denied the resurrection, and Tenet of the Chilliest. This true esteems them as wicked and heretical persons, but reckons them as Christians. Seeing then that the converts did retain generally their former opinions, and that Christianity its self was but a reformation of Judaism"(Henry Stubbe: The Rise and Progress of Mahometism).

John the Elder

The writer of the fourth Gospel commonly known as the "Gospel According to John" is in fact a mystery figure. Was he or was he not the author of John's Gospel, three letters ascribed to him and the Book of Revelation that are part of the New Testament? The "disciple whom Jesus loved" suddenly enters the scene at the trial of Jesus at the High Priest's house. At the Last Supper: "Now there was leaning on Jesus bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved"(JN 13:23). He claims as if he was a very close confidante of Jesus, apparently more than any of the other disciples. At the Last Supper when Jesus said "Verily, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (JN 13:21) the disciples looked on one another but did not take courage to ask who it would be. Even Peter did not ask Jesus directly but beckoned the "beloved disciple" leaning on Jesus' bosom that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake"(JN 13:24).

It appears that this disciple knew his ways and was even "known into the high priest" (JN 18:15) and could go into his palace when Jesus was arrested and brought for trial. "But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter"(JN 18:16). Although John, the beloved disciple, claims to be present at the palace of the High Priest he does not follow Jesus to Pilate's court. Most likely he slipped out to meet Joseph and Nicodemus to warn them of what was coming so they could make necessary arrangements for saving Jesus.

The "beloved disciple" must have been an influential man to have contacts with the high priest. He must have been a frequent visitor there for the maid servant to have allowed him inside High Priest's house unhindered and also to let him take Peter with him. It is often conjectured that he may have been the secret contact of Jesus in Jerusalem. So when Jesus asks for a colt with specific direction of its location, the arrangements may have been made beforehand with someone, perhaps this beloved disciple. While other Gospels say that Jesus gave specific directions, John does not disclose this elaborate instruction and suffices to say "Jesus found a donkey and mounted it"(JN 12:14).

The house at which Jesus had his passover meal must have been large. Jesus must have been told or known about it. Mark indicates as if there was a secret arrangement beforehand. "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a jar of water. Follow him, and when he enters a house give this message to the householder: The Master says, where is the room reserved for me to eat the Passover with my disciples? He will show you a large room upstairs, set out in readiness"(MK 14:13-15). The room upstairs is large and kept in readiness. The man with a water jar may not seem odd until we are reminded that men usually did not go to fetch water. It was a chore assigned to the females. It was indeed an odd sight to see such a man. So

the disciples could easily spot him and follow him discreetly without having to talk to him. Jesus would have needed a local, rather influential, disciple to arrange such things.

This "disciple whom Jesus loved" is the only male companion of Jesus who claims to be present at the site of crucifixion. "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home"(JN 19: 26,27). Even though he is present at Calvary, the site of crucifixion, he slips out before Jesus is taken off the cross and the "dead" body claimed by Joseph for burial. Possibly he is preparing to go to Galilee with Jesus' mother Mary, but not until it is verified that the body has been taken out so he is the first one to reach and look into the empty tomb.

He is also present at the sea of Tiberias when Jesus appears to his disciples after his "resurrection". When Jesus tells Peter "follow me"(JN 21:19) and Peter asks Jesus "Lord, what shall this man do? Jesus saith to him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"(JN 21:21,22).

We do not know much more than this about this "beloved disciple" except that possibly he lived a long life, engaged in missionary work in Ephesus and during the reign of Domitian(81- 91 C.E.), when the Christians were being persecuted, he moved, or was exiled, to the island of Patmos. Later he returned to Ephesus and died there. At the sea of Tiberias "Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples" were present when Jesus appears to them(JN 21:2). Thus, "the beloved disciple" could be either John son of Zebedee or any one of the "two other of his disciples". Church tradition has it that it was John, the son of Zebedee. However it is most doubtful if this semi-literate fisherman from Galilee is the author of the five documents in the New Testament that are attributed to him. The language(Greek) of the documents suggests someone rather well-read and learned. There is even a suggestion that some learned author wrote these on the basis of John Zebedee's memoirs. There is also a suggestions that the Fourth Gospel may have been based on the memoirs of Lazarus(see Chapter XIII).

All said and done, it is quite likely that the author, may be some unknown person who just borrowed the name "John" to provide authenticity to his writings. This was not an uncommon thing. Rather many authors in those times would do so even to honour their favourite heroes. He insists: "This is the disciple which testified of these things and wrote these things"(JN 21:24). The way he repeatedly stresses his being "beloved" and favourite underlines his claim of authority. He emphasises his role of not being just one of the disciples, but a special one, the one who ought to know Jesus' mind. He propounds his doctrine with the backing of that authority. He succeeded in having his five documents included in the New Testament, the largest number after that of Paul's epistles.

To distinguish the actual author, if he was not John, brother of James, son of Zebedee, this beloved disciple is also known as John the Elder or sometimes as John the Presbyter. The title "Elder" is in fact appropriated to himself by John in II Jn(1) and III Jn(1), or rather assigned by the mysterious author / forger of these letters.

St. Jude: "Modern scholars concur that the letter ascribed to Jude is of too late a date to have been written by any contemporary of Jesus. It is believed to have been composed early in the second century, very likely by an individual who was indeed named Jude and who together with his brother James, (the Just) presided over the Nazarean party at the time. But according to the earliest Church historians, James and Jude of the second century were the grandsons of another, older Jude, who was [or may have been] Jesus' brother... And yet, curiously enough,

there is no mention of Jude in Acts or in any other New Testament documents – at least not under that name" (Michael Baigent, et. al.: The Messianic Legacy, pp 79-80)

St. Jude the elder may actually have been Judas Thomas (Thomas Didymus), who may be brother of Jesus and James (the Just). Could this be Judas who in Acts(1:13) is variously referred to as "brother of James"(KJV). Most other more modern versions refer to him as "son of James". According to TJB (Footnote): "Son (of Alphaeus, of James) is not in the Greek". Thus Jude may not be Jude "brother" of Jesus,(MT 13:55 and MK 6:3,) and brother of James (Jude 1)".

PAUL AND CHRISTIANITY

The New Testament bears the imprint of Paul's doctrines and teachings more than anyone else's, including perhaps Jesus himself. The oldest writings in this collection is that of Paul and these writings have influenced everything else in there.

Paul was born with the name Saul; a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia(Acts 12:34). Saul belonged to a Benjamite family of considerable wealth. They were Roman citizens and thus privileged people. He was studying Jewish Law from the pharisees in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' crucifixion but apparently had not even seen Jesus. Later he joined the group of those who were persecuting the disciples of Jesus. The first time he is mentioned is at the stoning to death of Stephen(Acts 7:58): "and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul).....he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women committed them to prison"(Acts 8:3). Saul was not content to carry on his zealous handling of (early) Judo-Christians in Jerusalem, or even in Judaea. So he took letters from the High Priest to the synagogues of Damascus with authority to arrest those who believed in Jesus as a Christ.

On way to Damascus "there shined round about him a light from heaven and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord said I am Jesus whom thou persecutest"(Acts 9:3-5). As a result, Saul was converted to Christianity, becoming as fanatical an upholder of the belief as, earlier, he had been in opposing it. This ostensibly happened sometime between 32-34 C.E.

There are several intriguing things in Paul's story of his conversion. Firstly, how come the High Priest could issue letters of arrest for people in Damascus? He had limited jurisdiction in religious (and some civil) matters over the Jews within Judaea and at best within Palestine. But this would not apply even to Jews elsewhere in the Roman empire. If some of the Jews were following "any of this way "(Acts 9:2) then they could throw them out of the synagogues but Roman administration would not permit their arrest and transport all the way to Jerusalem! Secondly, Paul had never heard or seen Jesus. Even if he did "hear a voice" how could he recognise that it was really Jesus? Even the men accompanying him "heard a voice, seeing no man". Apparently his eyes were closed all this time for "when he opened his eyes he saw no man"(Acts 9:4-8). He saw nothing else but was then unable to see. Then "a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias" also had a vision in which Jesus told him that Paul "had seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive sight"(Acts 9: 10-12).

Now according to Acts after Paul's sight was restored, "Saul was with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God(Acts 9:9-20). This hides much because according to Paul himself "when that happened without consulting any human beings; without going up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, I went off at once to Arabia, and afterwards returned to Damascus. Three years later I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas. I stayed with him for a

fortnight, without seeing any other of the apostles, except James the Lord's brother. What I write is plain truth; before God I am not lying (Gal 1:16-20). It is very intriguing that having received his commission as an Apostle to the Gentiles Paul does not seek Jesus' close disciples and other Apostles but stays away for three years. It looks as if on the road to Damasus he must have come up with his novel idea then goes to "Arabia" and for three years ponders and develops his new doctrine. He goes to Jerusalem and tests his ideas on simple fisherman Peter/Cephas and the later convert James, the brother of Jesus. The disciples there were very apprehensive of him "but Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord" (Acts 9:27). Saul was accepted as a fellow "Christian", a term we may use to distinguish the new sect from the Jews. This contradicts with Paul's own assertion that he did not seek any other disciple beside Peter and Jesus' brother James quoted above.

"Meanwhile those who had been scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen made their way into Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, bringing the message to Jews only and to no others. But there were some natives of Cyprus and Cyrene among them and there, when they arrived in Antioch began to read to Gentiles as well, telling them the good news of the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with them, and a great many became believers, and turned to Lord. The news reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to Antioch" (Acts 11:19-26). Barnabas and Saul went around and 'they declared the Word of God in the Jewish synagogues. It is during one of these journeys that Saul's name is changed to Paul (Acts 13:9). There were violent confrontations and apparently few converts. Exasperated, they declared to the Jews: 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be declared to you first. But since you reject it and thus condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles' (Acts 13:46). It will be fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem before Paul returned there. There he urged his Greek companion Titus to be circumcised "as a concession to certain sham-Christians, interlopers, who had stolen in to spy upon the liberty we enjoy in the fellowship of Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:2-4). By now he felt confident to challenge the authority of the Apostles. In fact by smuggling Titus, the uncircumcised Greek, into the Temple Paul was trying to challenge the Jewish authorities and customs. It is for this reason that the Jews rioted against him (Acts 21:27-32).

Paul has played a very powerful role in developing the basis of what we now know as Christianity. Jesus was born a Jew and remained so throughout his earthly life. His disciples continued to be Jews and it is only at Antioch that the band of followers of Jesus were derogatorily called "Christians". Paul wanted to convey the message and teachings of Jesus to the Gentiles which even Jesus himself had not done or authorised. Jesus had directed his twelve missionary disciples: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter yet not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MT 10:5-6). He had told the woman from Canaan: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MT 15:22-26). Yet Paul claimed that the resurrected Jesus Christ had appointed him an Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul made out his own theological doctrines in order to make Christianity look different from Judaism and thus acceptable to the Gentiles.

In promoting his own doctrine Paul was willing to do anything. He offered sacrifice and went through the ritual of purification at Jerusalem and declared himself a Pharisee to appease the Jewish-Christians (Acts 21:22-24) when he needed his acceptance by the Apostles at Jerusalem. He kept Barnabas besides him when it was needed that someone who had been close to Jesus' Apostles should stay by his side to authenticate his mission. When faced with the Romans he saved his skin by declaring his Roman citizenship. To be popular among the Gentiles he changed his name from Saul to Paul. He allowed the Gentiles to remain

uncircumcised and even to eat pork. The Apostles had expressly forbidden eating of food offered to the idols. However, by advising "Whatever is set before you, eat, asking no questions for conscience sake"(1 Cor 11:27), Paul relaxed the Mosaic rules. Actually it was his desire to change the Mosaic Law that he undertook to be an Apostle to the Gentiles.

He started quarrels with Jesus' companions, who were now acting as Apostles and were preaching what Jesus himself had been teaching and practiced. Paul claimed "I had been entrusted with the Gospel for Gentiles as surely as Peter had been entrusted with the Gospel for Jews. For God whose action made Peter an Apostle for the Jews also made me an Apostle for the Gentiles. Recognizing then the favour bestowed on me, those reputed pillars of society, James, Cephas and John accepted Barnabas and myself as partners and shook hands upon it, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles while they went to the Jews"(Gal 2:7-9). Paul is not known to have met any other of the Apostles during his journeys. The shrewd Paul was thus able to prevail upon simpleton disciples of Jesus, as the Gospels project them under Paul's influence, to accept his claim as the Apostle to the Gentiles. These disciples themselves and their followers stuck to the original teaching of Jesus and taught the Gospel "to the Jews only and to no others"(Acts 11:19) as Jesus himself had wished them to do. This was to be only a stepping stone for Paul.

After the meeting in Jerusalem "then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas surnamed Barabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren"(Acts 15:22). A letter was therefore prepared to be delivered to the congregation and also to be preached by Judas and Silas saying ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled and from fornication"(Acts 15:29). This was, however, not to Paul's liking who wanted only fornication to be prohibited.

For some time he stayed beside Barnabas and questioned the opposing camp: "I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"(1 Cor 9:6). "But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face. Even Barnabas was carried away and played false like the rest"(GAL 2:12-13). By now he was also firmly committed to his doctrine of justification by faith and the abrogation of "the Law". It was natural that there be sharp disagreement between Barnabas the Jew and Paul the self-styled Apostle to the Gentiles.

Finally Paul broke away even from his mentor and companion Barnabas. By doing so he severed his last link with the original disciples of Jesus. It is interesting that in preparation of the split the writer of the Acts quietly changes Saul's hebraic name to its Greek version Paul as familiar to the Gentiles. Now before he eliminates Barnabas, he also changes "Barnabas and Paul" to "Paul and Barnabas" as in charge of the missionary work. "After a while Paul said to Barnabas, 'Ought we not go back now to see how our brothers are faring in the various towns where we proclaimed the Word of the Lord?' Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, but Paul judged that the man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone on with them to share in their work was not the man to take with them now. The dispute was so sharp that they parted company"(Acts 15:36-39). Although Paul mentions his name in his Epistle to the Colossians(4:10): "Barnabas, . . . he comes to you, receive him" written before the split, from now on the name Barnabas does not appear in the New Testament books written after this incident. Indeed no works of this former mentor of Paul is included among canonical literature. Rather such literature was sought out and burnt so that very little has survived till today.

It is interesting to study the episode of parting between Barnabas and Paul. The fact is that the split occurred between them because of doctrinal differences and not merely whether Mark should or should not be accompanying them. It is the same Mark who is supposedly the

author of the Gospel that bears his name. Paul did not consider him worthy of company yet his Gospel is keystone to the story of Jesus. It cannot be said whether he really wrote the Gospel or someone merely ascribed his name to it as was not uncommon in those days.

In order to really understand the true picture about the split let us consider how various translators have described this incident. According to KJV(Acts 15:39) "The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, one from another". Further descriptions are as below:-

KJV	Sharp contention	departed asunder
GNB	Sharp argument	separated
NEB	Sharp dispute	parted company
NIV	Sharp disagreement	parted company
NTC	Tempers flared	went their separate ways
NWT	Sharp burst of anger	separated
RBV	Strong disagreement	separated
RSV	Sharp contention	separated
TJB	Violent quarrel	parted company

All the translations seem to be deliberately soft-pedaling the incident and do not truly convey the essence of the actual Greek word "paroxysm" which is more than a mere parting of company or separation. This is indicated by the fact that for the "parting between the two" the Greek word used here has its only equivalent in the whole of the Bible in the Book of Revelation(6:14) where it is used for a violent shake up of heavens. Such a violent reaction could not be just on the question of the company of Mark, but evidently because of major doctrinal differences.

This then erupted into an open challenge: "So many people brag about their earthly distinctions that I shall do so too"(II Cor 11:18), "I can out-do them"(II Cor 11:23), "In no respect did I fall short of these superlative apostles"(II Cor 12:11). He even made boast of his ancestry, Jewish origin and righteousness: "If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin; an Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"(Phil 3:4-6). He called them "Judaizers" and "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light"(II Cor 11:13-14). "Beware of those dogs and their malpractices. Beware of those who insist on mutilation — 'circumcision' I will not call it"(Phil 3:2). [Here he used the term 'mutilation' as used by the Greeks]. Paul is touchy about the validation of his claim to his apostleship and in asserting it he acts haughty, aggressive, defensive, abusive, sarcastic and self-adjusting. Interestingly after this tirade Peter too drops out of picture and is not heard of any more in the Acts or anywhere in Paul's writings. Even though Paul and Peter are traditionally stated to be in Rome at the same time before their execution there, they never met after the split.

Paul raises himself to a high pedestal. A number of Hellenistic mystery cults had their initiates gaze at an icon of the God whose power was sought in order to effect a personal transformation. Since Jesus as the Son of God, and very God, was God's clearest icon on the earth, Paul declared: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"(Gal 6:17) and asks his

followers to imitate him: "Be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example"(NEB: you have us as a model)(Phil 3:17). The process of patterning is reciprocal as the divine image becomes more and more perceptible in the gaze of the followers, Paul becomes more and more assured that it has been present in him to begin with and now being passed on to the flock. "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God"(II Cor 1:21). "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image form glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"(II Cor 3:18).

It is amazing how Paul treats Jesus as if he was something abstract. In none of his epistles included in the New Testament does he ever mention his miraculous birth, his parents, incidents from his life or even any of his parables. According to Paul's own teachings miracles are associated with the Christian ministry as "gifts of the spirit"(I Cor 12:10,28) and the signs of a true apostle are "signs and wonders and mighty works"(II Cor 12:12). Yet he associates no such acts with Jesus. Following his example the other writers of New Testament books, outside the four Gospels, also do not cite any of Jesus' miracles. Through his complete disregard of the miracles that Jesus performed he seems even to deny whether Jesus in fact did perform any miracles. He does not refer even to Jesus' trial. His only concern is the "raised Jesus". Credit goes to Paul for transforming a "dead" Jesus into a "living Christ". The movement spread rather rapidly inspite of Jewish and Roman opposition since it suited pagan Gentile environment.

In II Cor(11:4) Paul says that "If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached" clearly admitting that his concept of 'Jesus' was different from the one about whom the Nazareans of the Mother Church at Jerusalem were preaching. We have very little more to lay our hands on what the 'Apostles' themselves were saying at the time. We get some indication, surprisingly within the New Testament itself in A Letter of James: "My brothers, what use is it for a man to say he has faith when he does nothing to show it? Can faith save him? faith divorced from deeds is barren a man is justified by deeds and not by faith in itself"(Jas 2:14-24). This was in direct contrast to what Paul was teaching: "No man is ever justified by doing what the law demands, but only through faith in Christ Jesus"(Gal 2:16).

Paul's teachings influenced the contents of the four Gospel which form part of the New Testament. Yet even the books of the New Testament have not come to us in the shape as they were written. We do not have the original manuscripts. Even whatever "originals" we have are the product of translations, re-translations, interpolations, deletions and subjective selection. It is known that Hebrew manuscripts were all destroyed. We do not have words of Jesus as they were spoken in his native Aramaic tongue. It is not known if Jesus left any written teachings or records like those of the Old Testament prophets. Most of what has been recorded is second hand narrated several years after the event. What has come to us is carefully screened and purposely compiled into a collection that was never intended to be so.

Jesus had proclaimed: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"(MT 5:17-19). He asked his disciples to follow the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees in spirit: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not(MT 23:2-3). On the contrary, Paul stressed: "he has canceled the bond that

pledged us to the decrees of the Law. It stood against us, but he has set it aside, nailing it to the cross"(Col 2:14), "We are discharged from the Law"(Rom 7:6), "Christ ends the Law and brings righteousness"(Rom 10:4). His emphasis on "discharged from the Law" is such that nowhere he mentions any of Jesus' teaching as if these did not matter any more or any way.

Paul gave new twists to his doctrine. He separated "Jesus" from "Christ". According to his reasoning the Law which had bound Jesus and his followers was no longer necessary, since Jesus had died. Now they were no longer "married" to Jesus, but to Christ, who had brought another law. It was therefore necessary to follow Christ and not Jesus(Rom 7:1-4). This shift of emphasis from Jesus as a man to the new image of Christ, who was divine, enabled the intellectuals in Greece and Rome to assimilate into their own philosophy what Paul and those who followed him were preaching.

To be fair to Paul he did not invent the theory of Trinity himself. But with Pauline Church's talk of "God, the Father" and "God, the Son", it only needed the inclusion of the "Holy Ghost" to create the doctrine of Trinity. Romans were already familiar with the idea of triumvirate where a coterie of "three equals" would rule Rome. The ideas of TRIUNE and TRIAD were already prevalent among the Gentiles and pagans and TRINITY did not look odd. The Church kept debating the doctrine of Trinity until it was formally adopted in 325 C.E. But even to this day it remains an ambiguous doctrine that many claim to understand but cannot clearly explain. The "three persons" of the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, being just "one person" remains an unexplainable concept!

"The irreconcilability of Jesus and Paul raises questions of considerable contemporary relevance. How many 'Christians' today, for example, are aware of the discrepancy between the two men? And in what, for them, does 'Christianity' reside? In what Jesus taught? Or in what Paul taught? Except by sleight of logic and distortion of historical fact, the two positions cannot be harmonised" (Michael Baigent, et. al.: The Messianic Legacy, pp. 69).

While we can find an easy way out of the dilemma about Jesus' disappearance and take refuge behind the shield of the upheavals of the era, we can point out that while a number of N.T. books as well as church traditions are said to have existed "uninterruptedly", we are unsure about the last days of no other person than (St.) Paul himself. This is what the "Twentieth Century Bible Commentary"(G.H. Davies, et. al., ed.) has to say: "The end we do not know. The travel-diary [Acts] ceases abruptly, and no account of the trial has been preserved. When Paul wrote to Philemon he was confident of acquittal. When he wrote to Philippians he was at best hoping against hope. There is a tradition that he was acquitted and resumed work for a time, perhaps even carrying out his intention of visiting Spain. But nothing is certain, and it is wholly likely that on the expiry of the two years either the Neronian persecution had broken out (in A.D. 64) or the policy of the Roman government had already changed in the direction which made the persecution possible, and that the forebodings expressed in the letter to the Philippians were fulfilled". Everything uncertain! Everything obscure! If Paul was indeed living Circa C.E. 64 then the question arises whether he had seen any of the synoptic gospels. Among other things he seems to be ignorant of Jesus' Virgin Birth which his (assumed) fellow traveler Luke takes special pains trying to record hoping to counter Jewish taunting of Jesus' alleged unknown paternity.

FALSE CHRISTS

MK(13:22), MT(24:24): For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

MT(24:5): For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.

MT(24:11): And many false prophets shall rise, and deceive many.

LK(21:8): Take care that you are not misled. For many will come claiming my name and saying, "I am he", and, "The Day is upon us". Do not follow them.

Rom(11:13): For I speak to you Gentiles, in as much as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.

1 Cor(14:37): What I write has the Lord's authority.

Gal(1:12): The gospel you heard me preach . . . I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Thess(5:2): The day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night.

1 IN(4:1): Believe not every spirit . . . because many false prophets are gone in the world.

MT(7:14,16): False Christs . . . Ye shall know them by their fruits.

CHAPTER XII

THE MIRACLES AND THE MESSAGE

If some-one came to us and said "I have received a divine revelation", how do we verify that claim? Our first reaction would perhaps be: "Is this possible?" The Greeks believed in arguing about it — Wisdom was their test. Jews who did believe in the possibility of divine revelation, and prophets, true or false, abounded among them, would naturally ask: "Show us the sign". In other words they wanted to have a verifiable proof that the claim was true. Mere words were not acceptable to them. "Then certain of the Pharisees and of the scribes answered, saying, Master we would see a sign of thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas"(MT 12:38-40, 16:4; LK 11:29-30). Mark(8:12), however, states that Jesus refused to give any sign.

THE MIRACULOUS SIGNS

When John the Baptist first saw Jesus he immediately recognised him "seeing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending from heaven and resting upon Jesus"(JN 1:32). This according to him made him accept Jesus as "God's chosen one"(JN 1:34). It is yet another thing that John(who happened to be a cousin of Jesus) somehow forgot this and later when he "heard in prison what Jesus was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him: 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive light, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor'" (MT 11:2-4). Thus, Jesus produced the testimony of his healing miracles first and then about his "good news". [It intriguing that Jesus was claiming credit for raising of the dead so early in his mission while the Gospels indicate these in later part of his ministry].

Gospels tell us that Jesus indeed performed many miracles and record as many as 38 of them. These are listed as below:

Peculiar to Mark	2	Total in Mark	18
Peculiar to Matthew	3	Total in Matthew	20
Peculiar to Luke	7	Total in Luke	21
Peculiar to John	8	Total in John	10
Common to Mark and Matthew	3		
Common to Mark and Luke	1		
Common to Matthew and Luke	2		
Common to Mark, Matthew and Luke	10		
Common to Mark, Matthew and John	1		
Common to all the Gospels	1		
TOTAL	38		

The various types of miracles listed in the Gospels may be broadly classified as below:

Deaf/dumb/blind cured	7
Lepers cured	2
Other ailments cured	10

Demoniacs cured	4
Raised to life	3
Feeding of the crowds	2
Physical disappearance	2
Others	8
TOTAL	38

We shall not raise any question about the possibility of the occurrence of miracles for that is beyond the range of our present discussions. We may, however, recognise the possibility of exaggeration or even myth involved in the quoted miracles. We may take up the three most important miracles of raising the dead to life.

Let us first take up the event of raising to life of Jairus' twelve years old daughter. This miracle is reported by all the three synoptic Gospels. Perhaps because once Mark reported it Matthew(Ch.9) and Luke(Ch.8) could not ignore to report such an extra-ordinary miracle. When Jesus reaches the house he said "The child is not dead: she is asleep"(MK 5:40). Then he says "TALITHA CUM" which means, Get up my child. Immediately the girl got up"(MK 5:41-42). We may raise the possibility that the girl was not dead as Jesus himself had pronounced.

The second incidence of raising the dead is recorded only by Luke(Ch.7): "As he approached the gate of the town he met a funeral. The dead man was the only son of his widowed mother; and many of the towns people were there with her. When the Lord saw her his heart went out to her, and he said, Weep no more. With that he stepped forward and laid his hand on the bier; and the bearers halted. Then he spoke; Young man rise up! The dead man sat up and began to speak; and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Deep awe fell upon them all, and they praised God. A great prophet has risen among us, they said"(LK 7:12-16). No other Gospel, however, reports this miracle. Granting that it may be an "exclusive" news that may have reached Luke, it is surprising that John coming later also does not report it. A similar incidence is reported in I King(17:17-22) wherein Elijah raises a widow's son to life. Elisha also raised a dead child of a woman(II Kg Ch.4).

John reports the famous case of Lazarus raised to life. On hearing of Lazarus' illness Jesus declares "The purpose of his illness is not death"(JN 11:4-TLB). "This sickness is not unto death"(KJV). "This sickness will not end in death"(NEB, NIV). Later he proposes to leave saying: "Our friend Lazarus has gone to sleep, but now I go and waken him!"(JN 11:11). The disciples, thinking Jesus meant Lazarus was having a good night's rest, said: that means he is getting better! But Jesus meant Lazarus had died. Then he told them plainly, Lazarus is dead....."(JN 11:12-14)....."Then he shouted, Lazarus come out! And Lazarus came bound up in the gravecloth, his face muffled in a head swath. Jesus told them, Unwrap him and let him go"(JN 11:43-44). We may ask if Lazarus was really dead or was he asleep as Jesus had first said! It is intriguing how could Lazarus come out of the tomb "bound in the gravecloth" which would have incapacitated him. John has presented it as a climax of Jesus' miracles on Earth as if it is the shadow of what is to come — Jesus himself will be dying, the stone blocking the tomb will be rolled off, Jesus will rise from the dead. It is very odd that such a powerful story, if it really happened, was ignored by the synoptic Gospels!

It is significant that after hearing the news of Lazarus' illness Jesus "abode two days"(JN 11:6). Suddenly after two days Jesus decided to leave. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus unto his fellow disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him"(JN 11:16). The story raises the question: If Jesus loved Lazarus then why did he wait two days? Why did

Thomas Didymus suggest that they all go to die — a mass suicide? Was Lazarus' act a Yoga-like ritual where the Yogi holds his breadth and appears not to be alive? Thomas' reaction then falls in line with Jesus' calm reaction to Lazarus' "sickness/death".

In the third century C.E. the Christian philosopher Origen conceded to his pagan opponents that some passages in the Gospels were by no means literally true, and indeed both absurd and impossible. "Some have suggested that the story of Lazarus is an allegorical one, intended to show, in concrete form, the power of Jesus' teaching. For that reason, it might be argued, John simply borrowed material for the purpose. The name Lazarus he might have adopted from the beggar in Luke's parable(LK 16), the one who went to heaven while the rich man went to hell. When the rich man asks that Lazarus be sent back to earth to warn the rich man's five brothers of the torment awaiting them, Abraham, from heaven, assures the rich man: if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"(Isaac Asimov: Guide To Bible). Here is yet another explanation why the Jews did not accept Jesus' resurrection, or why it was to be of no avail.[Also see Chapter XIII].

There have been incidences many times reported in newspapers where persons supposed to have been dead have risen up at some stage of their burial. Some poor souls may get buried alive under the misconception that they were actually dead. Before Jesus cured a person 'possessed of a spirit' people were thinking of him 'as one dead'(MK 9:26). When Iconcan Jews stoned Paul they dragged his body out of the city thinking him to be dead(Acts 14:19). Similarly after Eutychus fell down from the house he was considered to have died(Acts 20:9-10) until Paul observed him and declared him to be alive. Could the miracles of 'raising from the dead' be in fact cases of mistaken conception of death? Could we not say the same for Jesus' so-called death-on-the Cross and later 'resurrection' ?

There are possibilities of fiction being mixed with some facts turning these into myths. There is always the possibility of a molehill being turned into a mountain through folk communication. There are always possibilities of reporting parallels from old folklore or even Old Testament "miracles". Elijah took "an handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse" from a widow and made it last for several days for himself as well as for the whole of the family of the widow(I Kg 17:12-15). Prophet Elisha also fed one hundred and twenty men with just twenty loaves of bread and some ripe ears of corn(II Kg Ch.4).

In the case of Jesus Mark relates not just one but two miracles of feeding large crowds. In the first case(MK Ch.6) five thousand people are fed with just five loaves and two fish(5+2=7). In the second case the writer seems to have overlooked that he had already included a similar miracle under the same circumstances so he once again makes Jesus feed five thousand people with just seven loaves(5+2=7). Matthew must have noticed the duplication and therefore relates the incidence of feeding four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish(MT Ch. 15). Luke picks up the case of feeding five thousand with just five loaves and two fish(LK Ch. 9). Whichever the case it would be very odd and most unusual, if not totally out of question, that in rural Galilee everyone did not bring enough food for himself for the journey. They may be hesitant to be the first one to start eating. By offering to share his own food Jesus just encouraged them to share with everyone else. No wonder there was more than enough for everyone and something to spare.

After a long draught when there was no water, Elijah filled twelve jars of water for an offering(I Kg 18:32-34). Prophet Elisha also filled a large number of empty vessels with oil through a miracle(II Kg Ch.4). So Jesus is also made to turn six stone jars full of water into wine(JN Ch. 2). Elisha also cured Naaman the leper(II Kg Ch.5). There is no dearth of such incidences in the Bible itself. In Jesus' own time the Galilean sage HANINA BEN DOSSA was

being credited with miraculous powers. He cured Gamaliel's son. [He too was known as "God's son"]. The evangelists deny such power to John the Baptist: "John gave us no miraculous signs but all he said about this man was true" (JN 10:41). This is not surprising as the evangelists were projecting Jesus at a time when there was a large body of John's disciples who did not accept Jesus.

How far these miracles actually happened is not under question here. We are just raising the possibility of exaggeration or even concoction. Jesus himself said: "False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (MK 13:22). In fact there are at least twenty seven miracles reported in Acts which were performed by Jesus' own disciples and Paul. Another six such miracles are reported in Paul's epistles and in Revelation. Besides it is recorded that many other miracles were performed (e.g. Acts 8:6). However, others showing similar tendencies are not credited with miracles but are said to be performing magic. For example, of Simon of Samaria people were saying "This man is that power of God which is The Great Power and they listened to him because they had for so long been carried away by his magic" (Acts 8:10-11).

While there may have been many miracles there were occasions when "he could work no miracles.....he was taken aback by their lack of faith" (MK 6:5-6). The failure to perform miracles was no fault of Jesus himself. The blame was placed squarely on the lack of faith of the people. Faith plays a major role in the occurrence of many miracles, perhaps all of them. When the daughter of the president of a Synagogue died, Jesus was approached and he said "As you have believed, so let it be" (MT 9:30); Mark (5:36) and Luke (8:50) record that he said "Do not be afraid only have faith", and the girl came to life again. When the woman, who was having haemorrhages for twelve years, touched his coat, she was instantly cured! Jesus told her "your faith has cured you" (MK 5:34, MT (9:22, LK 8:48). Matthew (8:10) and Luke (7:9) record the request even of a Gentile centurion being granted for curing his servant, to show such faith in a Gentile superior to that of a Jew. Jesus is stated to have said: "No-where have I found such faith, not even in Israel". When a storm hit the boat he was travelling with his disciples, they were naturally worried. But he stilled the tempest and rebuked his companions: "How little faith have you" (MT 8:26); "Where is your faith?" (MK 4:40, LK 8:25). Since the source of all trouble is SIN, faith was necessary for healing. On curing a leper Jesus told him: "Leave your sinful ways, or you may suffer something worse" (JN 5:14). He cured the paralysed man and said "your sins are forgiven" (MK 2:5, MT 9:2-3). His disciples could not cure an epileptic of his demons and Jesus had to perform the miracle. "Afterwards the disciples came to Jesus and asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (MT 17:19-21). Thus faith accompanied by prayer and fasting to ward off sin (and sickness) were necessary.

Verse 21 quoted above "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" is included in KJV and RBV but most modern translations (NIV, NEB, GNB, NWT), do not include it and some prefer to put it in the footnotes saying: some manuscripts include 21....However, the same sentence occurs in MK 9:29 and KJV includes it in the same manner. Also NIV, NEB, GNB, NWT as well as RBV include it there but omit "fasting".

The exorcism and curing that Jesus performed were not divorced from his message; in fact his prime intention was not merely to cure the sick and the possessed but to symbolize and prefigure their salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven. "Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and

sickness among the people"(MT 4:23). When he sent out the twelve apostles his command was: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out the devils"(MT 10:8). This, however, was of secondary importance; the primary purpose was to "preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is in hand"(MT 10:7). According to Mark "He appointed twelve as his companions, whom he would send out to proclaim the Gospel, with a commission to drive out devils"(MK 3:14-15). Luke also endorses this: "He now called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases then he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick"(LK 9:1-2).

Only Luke tells us that Jesus also "chose another seventy two men and sent them out two by two, to go ahead of him to every town and place where he himself was about to go"(LK 10:1). "The seventy two came back in great joy. Lord, they said, even the demons obeyed us when we gave them a command in your name"(LK 10:17). It is interesting that some people consider that the number of close disciples was twelve which is also the number of the tribes of Israel. The number seventy two is the same as the number of translators of the Old Testament into Greek. Some of the old manuscripts mention "seventy" instead of seventy two. This is the literal meaning of the word Septuagint, which designates the Greek translation.

We come back to the question if at least some, if not all, the miracles of Jesus were real. Could at least some of the miracles be allegorical? Let us take up the miracle of coin in the fish's mouth: The tax-gatherer had approached Jesus and asked whether Jesus was to pay taxes. Jesus tells Peter 'Go to the sea, cast a fishhook and take the first fish coming up and, when you open its mouth, you will find a stater coin. Take that and give it to them for you and me'(MT17:27). If we did not believe in supernatural miracles we could interpret this as ".....you open its mouth [unhook it and go sell it] there is your stater coin!" The rest will be taken care of by people's natural tendency to create myths. Jesus was used to saying parables, "in fact he never spoke to them without a parable"(MK 4:34, MT 13:35). Here he may be using a fable.

Myth or miracle, Jews of the times must have taken them seriously for "His fame reached the whole of Syria; and sufferers from every kind of illness, racked with pain, possessed by devils, epileptic, or paralysed, were all brought to him, from Galilee and the Ten Towns (DECAPOLIS), from Jerusalem and Judaea, and from Trans-Jordan"(MT 4:23-25). But this was not Jesus' primary purpose. He would not want to be just another wonder-worker.

Sorcery and magic was the order of the day. The first reaction would be that the man may be just another faith healer. Perhaps for this reason he is said to be asking that these healings be kept secret! When he raised the dead girl to life he wanted this to be kept secret and "gave strict orders to let no one hear about it"(MK 5:43). When people said that because of his healing powers "you are the Son of God, but he insisted that they should not make him known"(MK 3:12, also see MT 9:30, 12:16). On curing a leper "he gave him strict orders ... see that you tell nobody a thing, but go show yourself to the priest and offer in behalf of your cleansing the things Moses directed for a witness to them. But after going away the man started to proclaim it a great deal...."(MK 1:43-45; also see MK 5:20, LK 5:14). In fact, more he asked them to tell not, the more they publicised it. His emphasis on secrecy was not without foundation. Even Peter had his doubts, at least initially. Previous to his calling Jesus had cured his mother-in-law(MK 1:29-31). When Jesus made Peter catch a large draught of fish, Peter was awe-struck but asked "Go, Lord, leave me, sinner that I am!"(LK 5:8).

In the country of Gergesenes he ordered the unclean spirit to leave a man who was demon-possessed and had been put in fetters and lived in tombs. Motivated by the unclean spirits the madman threw himself in front of him and shouted loudly, What business is it of yours to bother me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg of you, do not torture me"(LK 8:28).

"Jesus asked him, What is your name? He said, 'Legion' because many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to order them to go away into the abyss. But there was a huge herd of swine grazing on the hillside, and they asked him to give them permission to enter them; which he allowed. Then the demons left the man and entered the swine and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned" (LK 8:30-33). ... "The people came out to see what had happened and, reckoning Jesus, they found the man out of whom the devils had departed, sitting at Jesus' feet.....and all the Gergesenes and the people living around them requested him to leave them; for they were thoroughly frightened.....The man whom the demons had left begged to accompany him, but Jesus sent him away, saying Go back to your home and tell all that God has done for you" (LK 8:35-39, MK 5:17). The above episode has all the accompaniments of a myth. Yet it shows people's reactions — sometimes favourable, sometimes not favourable. In fact, "inspite of the many signs that he showed them they would not believe him" (JN 12:37).

The account of Elisha's raising from dead the son of a widow is given in II Kings(4:34-35): "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his month, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm ... and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes". Scholars are divided whether Elisha's successful resuscitation of the child was due to miraculous intervention or mere artificial respiration. It is assumed that Elisha himself must have narrated the procedure since he is stated to have been alone with the child in the room with no one watching his actions. Interestingly, the account of Elisha's miracle is exactly similar to that of Elijah's raising of a widow's son. This raises the possibility of a repeated myth.

Elisha's miracles seem to be not much different from those attributed to Jesus. Yet no one assigns any extraordinary, divine, status to Elisha on the basis of his miracles. Interestingly inspite of the fact that Jesus is said to have performed many miracles the Jews seems to be ignorant about these and therefore ask to see 'sign' from him(MT 12:38-40, LK 11:29-30) as if the already-performed miracles were not enough. In any case miracles do not confer any title to divinity or other miracle workers would also qualify to be divine.

MAKING OF A MYTH/MIRACLE

One of the saints of India was passing through a village. Both a rich man and a poor man brought him food to eat. He preferred the simple food brought by the poor man to the feast presented by the rich man. Asked why he chose to partake of the poor man's simple food he picked up the bread and said that because it contained the milk of hard honest labour. Then he picked the bread brought by the rich man and stated that on the contrary this contains the sweat and blood of poor people.

According to the popular belief he squeezed the two breads and out came milk from the poor man's bread and blood from the rich man's bread. At best it was a miracle for the believers. For the skeptic this is merely a flight of fancy, making of a myth!

THE MESSAGE

"After John had been arrested Jesus went to Galilee preaching the good news about God, saying, the time is completed and the kingdom of God is near; repent and believe in the good news"(MK 1:14). This is the same message which John the Baptist had been conveying: "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of the sins"(LK 3:3), "Repent ye: for the

kingdom of heaven is in hand"(MT 3:2). Jesus' words were the same: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is in hand"(MT 3:17).

If Jesus' mission was in fact the inauguration of the Kingdom of Heaven, or Kingdom of God, whatever term we may want to use, then at least no Jew would have had any objection to it. Jewish tradition required that one should have association with the righteous and there should be no contact with the sinners. The extreme case known to us is the Qumran community which had withdrawn itself from the world and preferred to live in seclusion. If Jesus had adopted this course for his followers then nobody would have felt unhappy.

Jesus on the other hand apparently wanted a world where there would be no sinners! His work of cleansing meant cleansing from sin. He was often seen with sinners, tax-collectors and other socially undesirable characters. "Some Pharisees and some teachers of law who belonged to their group complained to Jesus' disciples: Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and other outcasts? They said. Jesus answered them, People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people to repent, but outcasts"(MK 2:16-17, MT 9:13, LK 5:30-32), Tax-gatherers and other bad characters were always crowding in to listen to him(LK 15:1).

It may look strange that the Pharisees, the Scribes and the Sadducees were not coming to listen to him too often. But this itself perhaps provides the key to the conflict. Jesus, even though preaching righteousness, was directly in competition with them. These learned people considered religion as their monopoly and their whole earthly prestige and economic benefits were tied to this privileged. Jesus was a reformer who wanted a straight-forward relationship with God without ritualism and commercialism. He was apparently not averse to them. When he cured a leper he told him "Shew thyself to the priest"(MT 8:4) as was required under the Law.

This does not mean that he wanted to do away with religion or amend any of the Laws laid down by Moses: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever will do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"(MT 5:19-20; also see LK 16:16,17). When someone asked him "Master what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?...he said...keep the commandments"(MT 19:16-17; also see LK 18:18-20).

The above sayings of Jesus underline the fact that Jesus did not teach against the obedience to the Law and the commandments. On the other hand Paul stressed: "he has cancelled the bond that pledged us to the decrees of the law"(Col 2:14). Luke plays down Jesus' above-quoted saying: "Until John, it was the Law and the Prophets; since then there is the good news of the Kingdom of God"(LK 16:16).

He called out: "Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief"(MT 11:28-29). "Whence a man believes in me he believes in him who sent me rather than in me"(JN 12:44-45); "I do nothing on my own authority"(JN 8:28); "I am the light of the world"(JN 8:1); "I am the real vine"(JN 15:1); "The sight of the people moved him with pity: they were like sheep, harassed, and helpless"(MT 9:36). So he called out: "I am the good shepherd"(JN 10:14). He enjoined: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you"(LK 6:31). "Love your enemies; do good to them which hate you; bless them that curse you; pray for them

which despitefully use you"(LK 6:27-28). He taught: "When a man hits you on the cheek, offer him the other cheek too"(LK 6:29). "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate"(LK 6:36). "Love thy neighbor" was his pet theme. His 'Sermon on the Mount' as composed by Matthew condenses many of his teachings(MT 5:3-9):

"Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they that hunger
and thirst for righteousness:
for they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in hearts:
for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peace-makers:
for they shall be called the children of God".

He declared: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into kingdom of God"(MT 19:24).

Jesus' mission from now on was the single-minded concentration on the initiation of the Kingdom of God. The Lord's Prayer, the only prayer Jesus taught to his disciples, specifically seeks: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"(MT 6:10). Jesus proclaimed his message: Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

THE DAY OF THE LORD

For centuries the Old Testament prophets had referred to "the Lord's Kingdom". It did not mean any earthly kingly rule. But a divine authority of God permanently in existence which will cause sin to be abolished and righteousness to prevail. Zechariah had pronounced, "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one"(Zech 14:9). Daniel in his vision had foretold about the things to come. Psalmist(98:9) had declared: "He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity".

In the last book of the Old Testament Malachi(4:1-3) prophesied: "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stable: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of the hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of thy feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of the host". The Old Testament ends with the prophecy: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"(Mal 4:5-6). This was the theme of Jewish apocalyptic writings and Israel looked forward to the coming of Elijah and the establishment of God's holy community. Isaiah had written: "The spirit of Lord God is upon me; because the Lord God hath anointed me to preach good tidings..... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that

mourn"(Isa 61:1-2). This is the text that Jesus is supposed to have read at the Nazareth Synagogue, then quietly announced: "This passage of scripture has come true today in your hearing"(LK 4:21). He had announced the coming of Lord's Kingdom. From now on every act of Jesus was according to one prophecy or another as if divinely orchestrated so meticulously that skeptics wonder if Jesus was deliberately enacting to "fulfil the scripture"(MK 14:49, LK 24:27) or if the Gospel-writers had intentionally made it look so.

The Gospel writers go to great length to dig out relevant or irrelevant texts from the Old Testament books to coincide with every action of Jesus. Sometimes one wonders if an event had indeed been concocted to fit a given text. Every conceivable subtlety or ingenuity, including manipulations and conflations of the most implausible kinds were held to be justified in order to extort contemporary meanings from those earlier scriptural sayings.

About the coming of the Lord's day Jesus declared: "When ye see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains. And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter"(MK 13:14-18). "When ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done, Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"(MK 13:29-32; also see LK 17:20).

One needs to be patient to analyse this statement. The events in Judaea had already occurred at the time of writing this warning. Was this statement invented by the evangelist? Perhaps Jesus may have said that only the Father knew the day and the hour; the rest may have been interpolated. However, there are several statements attributed to Jesus which do indicate that the time was indeed near: "Before you have gone through all the towns of Israel, he declared to the apostles, the great day will come"(MT 10:23). "There are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the Kingdom of God already come in power"(MK 9:1). "I can tell you this: the present generation will live to see it"(MT 24:34, LK 21:32). "What I say to you, I say to everyone: keep awake"(MK 13:37, LK 12:35). It was understood that John the evangelist would be living to see the return of the Lord(JN 21:22-23). "And they thought the reign of God might dawn at any moment"(LK 19:11). Later the New Testament writers, Paul as well as others, carried on the theme: "The time we live in will not last long"(I Cor 7:29). "The day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night"(I Thess 5:2). "An age that is near to close"(Jas 5:4). "The coming of the Lord is near"(Jas 5:8).

THE GREAT MISCONCEPTION

It is almost two thousand years since the prediction was made by Jesus about the coming of the day of Lord which is still awaited. In the meantime the Jewish leaders saw Jesus as a challenge to their monopoly. In him they also saw the danger that his claim of being the Messiah might mean an insurrection. "When the people saw the signs Jesus had performed, the word went around, Surely this must be the prophet that was to come into the world. Jesus aware that they meant to come and seize him to proclaim him king, withdrew again to the hill by himself"(JN 6:14-15). "Can it be that our rulers have actually decided that this is the Messiah?"(JN 7:26).

The Chief Priests and the Pharisees convened a meeting of the Council and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them named Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not"(JN 11:47-50). Thus they conspired to kill him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not"(JN 1:11).

In their single-minded fixation of a glorious royal Messiah of the line of David, the Jews overlooked the warnings Jesus had been issuing to them. He had been telling his disciples not to tell anyone he was the Messiah(MT 16:20) because he did not want to nurture the misconception. The only sign he was willing to give was the Sign of Jonas the prophet. His disciples and later followers too misinterpreted this prediction. Some thought that "as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"(MT 12:38-40, LK 11:29-30). In fact what he was trying to tell them was: Repent and save yourself; as the Ninevites repented and saved themselves from the wrath of the Lord after Jonas warned them. The Jews of Israel did not pay any heed to Jesus' foretoldings and not much later in reality the abomination of desolation was all over Judaea. It was the day of the Lord. His judgment on Israel had come. It was all over. The covenant and the sceptre shall now pass over to the nation to whom it will now rightfully belong(Gen 49:10).

If we look at the sudden, and unfortunate end to Jesus' mission a question crops up almost naturally, unintentionally: Was Jesus a failure? The answer to this question lies in how one looks at his life and mission. From the purely Jewish point of view, and modern Jews do not see anything wrong with what Jesus was saying, his mission did not fulfil the hope that a Messiah was expected to do. For Christians, Jesus had a victory over death and having ascended to heaven now sits on the right hand of God till the time he returns to this world to complete the task that was expected of him by the Jews in the first instance. So from that point of view also the mission remains unfulfilled.

However, according to our argument, Jesus the messenger of God, a prophet, was expected no more than to convey the MESSAGE that he was assigned by the Almighty, All-knowing, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, God, the One and Only: "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He completed his task. If the Jews did not listen to him, then it was to their hurt, and what a calamity did that perverse generation had in store for them! His circumstance of birth and death had no bearing on his mission. The account given in the Gospels is anyway garbled.

FOR JEWS ONLY

There is no disputing that Jesus was a Jew. The following explanation received by the writer from The World-wide Church of God, Pasadena, California, U.S.A., is quoted:

"The word 'Jew' is a shortened form of the old English word 'Judean,' referring to the descendants of the patriarch Judah. In the New Testament genealogies, both Mary and Joseph are listed as descendants of Judah, through the line of David(MT 1 and Luke 3). Jesus was not only a descendant of Judah — He was not only a Jew — but He was of the Davidic — the kingly — line of Judah. Numerous verses refer to Jesus as the son of David.

The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda"(Heb. 7:14). In Revelation 5:5, Jesus is called the "Lion of the tribe of Juda." Long before His birth, it was prophesied that Shiloh — the Messiah, the Prince of Peace — would come from the tribe of Judah(Gen. 49:10).

In His conversation with the woman at the well, Jesus said, "Ye [Samaritans] worship ye know not what. we [Jews] know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews"(John 4:22). Jesus used the pronoun "we" and clearly considered Himself to be a Jew. But the Jews rejected Him — He came "unto his own, and his own received him not"(JN 1:11).

Paul wrote about God's sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh(Rom. 8:3). Christ took on the flesh and blood of His physical parent Mary(Heb. 2:14). Jesus was born as a human being by a divine begetting into the nation, area, and family of Judah. Jesus was a Jew!

Before we proceed further an explanation may be in order. Genesis(49:10) reads thus: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be"(KJV). NIV also has it that the kingdom will belong to Judah "until he came to whom it belongs". According to NWT it will remain with Judah "until Shiloh comes". RBV also states "until Shiloh comes". This means that when Shiloh, the Prince of Peace, comes the kingdom will pass out of the hands of Judah and pass on "to whom it belongs". Since Jesus belonged to the tribe of Judah, in the kingly line of David, the kingship not remaining with Judah implies that it is not Jesus to whom the kingdom will pass on. Who then is the one to whom it will pass on, is yet another matter to be dealt with separately (See Appendix III). To get out of this difficulty GNB translates: "Judah will hold the royal sceptre and his descendants will always rule". This is clearly not what was originally meant! In any case instead of David's descendants ruling the world they went into dispersion persecuted by those who call themselves the followers of the Prince of Peace.

From the teaching of Old Testament we learn that "I will establish the throne of the kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David thy father". The Messiah was to be for the Jews only. Entrenched in the Jewish thought and tradition Jesus declared: "Salvation is of the Jews only"(JN 4:22). He preached only to the Jews in their synagogues(MT 4:23, Lk 4:44). He emphasised: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"(MT 5:17). When a Canaanite woman came to him asking for curing her daughter, Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel....It is not right to take children's bread and throw it to the dogs"(MT 15:24-26, MK 7:27). At another occasion he is quoted to have said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you"(MT 7:6). Both dog and swine(German: Shwine-hund) show the intensity of his feeling toward non-Jews. If he was to be the Messiah for the Jews oppressed by the Gentiles then these feelings seem plausible.

When he sent out the Twelve he "commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"(MT 10:5,6). It is interesting that while Mark and Matthew quote such remarks, later writers especially Luke and John shy away from these since they did not want to give such impression to the Gentiles about Jesus' own feelings toward them. So when a Gentile centurion approaches Jesus for the healing of sick servant, Jesus heals the servant for a very special reason: "No where, even in Israel, have I found such faith"(MT 8:10). But it is noteworthy that Jesus did not enter the house of the Gentile centurion.

In order to show that Jesus did have some contact with Samaritans John tells the story of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets at a well and asks her for a drink. "The Samaritan woman said, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman in Samaria?"(JN 4:9). Then John, or some later copyist explains: "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans"(KJV); Jews and Samaritans, it should be noted, do not use vessels in

common(NEB). The intensity of Jewish feeling is further indicated from the reaction of the disciples who come and find him talking to a Samaritan woman: "Yet no man said, What seekest thou? or Why talkest thou with her?"(JN 4:27). This was not the only occasion when Jesus was seen talking to "a woman", what was astonishing and shocking was that he was seen talking to a "Samaritan woman".

We should suspect that John himself made up much of the story. Had Jesus really taken a drink from this "unclean" woman the Jews would certainly have accused him of that. They had been objecting to his eating even with Jewish sinners, they were objecting to his disciples eating with 'defiled' (unclean) hands(LK 6:1-4). Drinking from a non-Jewish, Samaritan of all the people, would have given them something to whip him with. This opportunity they would never have allowed to pass by. Yet they never accused him of that.

Had there been any truth in the story Jesus' disciples would not have objected to Peter's meeting and eating with Gentiles after Jesus' "ascension": "They that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them"(Acts 11:2-3). Apparently Peter abandoned this practice "because he was afraid of the advocates of circumcision.....even Barnabas was carried away and played false like the rest"(Gal 2:12-14). Interestingly, when Luke tries to show that Jesus wanted to stay in a Samaritan village, "the villagers would not have him"(LK 9:53). The dislike must have been mutual!

When talking to the Twelve he [this included Judas Iscariot!] told them "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"(MT 19:28). When Jesus appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus, they said "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"(LK 24:21). Just before Jesus was ascended "they asked him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?"(Acts 1:6). The letter purported to have been written by James and included in the New Testament is addressed to the twelve tribes of Israel"(Jas 1:1). ALWAYS ISRAEL! Always only the Jews! After Jesus "ascension" his followers preached "the word to none but unto the Jews only"(Acts 11:19). Even Barnabas and Saul,(Paul) started their mission "preaching the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews"(Acts 13:5). It is after the Jews rejected the new teaching that "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"(Acts 13:46). It is Paul who declared himself to be "light to the Gentiles"(Acts 13:46).

Was this "Turning to the Gentiles" what Jesus did or would have authorised? There can be no doubt that the answer to this query is "NO". Pauline Church would, however, like us to believe, as the synoptic Gospels also indicate, that this was authorised by the "risen Christ". In the acknowledged interpolated last part of Mark's Gospel Jesus is alleged to have commanded his disciples/Apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature"(MK 16:5, KJV) [NIV, NWT: "all creation"]. Matthew and Luke follow suit: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, even to the end of the world, Amen"(MT 28:19-20). "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"(LK 24:47). Luke repeats the idea in his book of the Acts: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the world"(1:8).

Did (risen) Jesus really authorise going out to the Gentiles. Ignoring the manifest interpolation in Mark, it cannot be asserted on the testimony of Matthew and Luke that Jesus meant "Gentiles" when he talked of "all nations" or "uttermost part of the world". This can

easily be interpreted as "Jews in all nations and lands unto the uttermost part of the world" —
NO GENTILES!

If Jesus really commanded his disciples/Apostles to go out to the Gentiles then it is perplexing why did they not do so and preached "the word to none but unto the Jews only"(Acts 11:19). Philip's going out to Samaria and preaching there does not fall into the category of going out to "the Gentiles". Even though the Samaritans were considered "unclean" because they did not follow run-of-the-mill Judaism, they were nevertheless renegade Jews and did believe in the Torah (Pentateuchs). Proselytizing among them was not unusual.

Jesus' commands recorded by Matthew and Luke (as well as Mark) are clearly after-thoughts in line with the Pauline belief. These could easily be considered to be later interpolation especially the text in Matthew's Gospel which includes "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"(MT 28:19), — this baptismal formula was conjured long after even Paul himself and possibly in the fourth century C.E. as the dogma of Trinity was developed.

The legacy of Jesus was, however, not easy to discard. Christianity could not break its link with the "hope of Israel" and so even Paul, the self-styled Apostle to the Gentiles could not help but to say "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain"(Acts 28:20). He had to admit "Christ became a servant of the Jewish people to maintain the truth of God by making good his promises to the patriarchs"(Rom 15:8). Yet he slipped in his own doctrine "and at the same time to give the Gentiles cause to glorify God for his mercy"(Rom 15:9). Paul took Christianity to the pagans, his followers paganised it.

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

(PEUAGGALION PKATA THOMAS)

**These are the sayings that the living Jesus spoke
and Didymus Judas Thomas recorded:**

TH(15): When you see one who was *not born of a woman*, fall on your faces and worship. That one is your Father.

TH(35): One cannot enter a strong person's home and take it by force without tying his hands. Then one can loot his house.

TH(45): One does not gather grapes from thorn trees.

TH(46): From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women, no one is so much greater than John that his eye should not be averted.

TH(47): A slave cannot serve two masters, otherwise that slave will honour the one and offend the other.

TH(48): If two make peace with each other in a single house, they will say to the mountain, Move from here!, and it will move.

TH(62): I disclose my mysteries to those (who are worthy) of (my) mysteries. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

TH(82): Whoever is near me is near the fire, and whoever is far from me is far from the (Father's) domain.

TH(100): Give the emperor what belongs to the emperor, give God what belongs to God.

TH(113): His disciples said to him, When will the (Father's) imperial rule come? Jesus said, It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, Look here!, or Look there! Rather, the Father's imperial rule is (already) spread out on the earth, and the people do not see it.

TH(114): Peter said to him, Make Mary (of Magdala) leave us, for females do not deserve (spiritual) life. Jesus said, Look I will guide her to make her (like a) male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the domain of Heaven.

NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH

In our preceding analysis of the Gospels and other books of the New Testament we have considered their contents on their face value and still exposed their hollowness. The Gospel accounts of various events such as the birth narrative, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, "cleansing" of the Temple, his arrest and trial, crucifixion, in fact almost everything becomes subject to serious doubt. Elusiveness, reticence, absurdities and contradictions manifest in these accounts. Even a casual reading of these holy scriptures raises doubts which can bring shock to the thinking reader. An immediate reaction that one gets is that the accounts that as presented are like the tip of an iceberg — it shows a little but much more is hidden underneath. We therefore need to scratch a little more and discover what may have been concealed between the lines.

The more we go through the Gospels the more we are perplexed and confused about their contents. As we compare the varying accounts of different Gospels and Paul's own version of various events we find them absurd, preposterous, far fetched, and difficult to believe. They may have satisfied the early Christians on blind faith but the modern reader seeking credulity finds them tendentious and very often contradictory.

Most modern (Christian) theologians now openly admit the Gospels to be historically inaccurate. The message of Jesus presented by the Gospels for the most part is not authentic but stamped by the faith of the primitive Christian church in its early formative years. These accounts of Jesus' work, mission and even the historical narratives have been edited, omitted, completed or created according to the requirements of preaching and faith of the local congregations. These are said to be a witness of faith rather than historical reports. Each community interpreted out of its own experience what for it had already become a mere history. How far that community preserved an objectively true picture of Jesus and his message is highly questionable.

The oldest part of the New Testament, Epistles of Paul, were written a quarter of a century after Jesus, in the fifties of the first century C.E. The oldest of the four Gospels, the Gospel according to Mark, was written around the year 70 C.E., the Gospels of Matthew and Luke possibly between 70 and 75 C.E. and 75 and 80 C.E. respectively and the Gospel of John around the year 100 C.E. Authorship of these Gospels is itself doubtful but secondary for our immediate purpose because these are the only reports acceptable to the Christian faithfuls. However, let it be said that as and when these were written even the writers themselves may not have dreamt in their wildest dreams that their accounts will one day form the basic cornerstones of the religion ascribed to Jesus' preachings. For almost three centuries these accounts remained uncanonical, unrecognised, until decreed so by the arbitrary decision of a pagan emperor, albeit after extensive editing and rewriting.

The canon literature discloses to us only such accounts as thought fit by its writers through tainted glasses. The Acts of the Apostles which is a history of the early church chooses to disclose a precious little about that church and Jesus' Apostles at Jerusalem. We hear about these Apostles carrying out regular worship with only casual interference from the Jewish authorities until we are told of their sudden persecution and stoning (a religious punishment) of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and later beheading (by the sword, a criminal penalty) of James Zebedee (Acts 12:2). We are surprised when another James is mentioned later whom we can recognise only as "the Lord's brother" only after referring to Paul's epistle to the

Galatians(1:19). If he was really a brother of Jesus then during Jesus' lifetime he was opposed to Jesus' mission. How did he get to be the leader of the Apostles and the(Judo-Christian) Mother Church? We also do not get to know of Symeon, a cousin of Jesus who was elected to lead the movement on the death of James and was executed by the order of Sanhedrin in the year 62 C.E. We do not know of their opposition to Paul and his teachings except through Paul's own vituperative and vitriolic attacks against them in his Epistles. We hear no more of Barnabas as soon as he parts company with Paul. Of all the people even Mary, "Mother of God" to most Christians, is relegated to oblivion as are most of Jesus' near and dear ones.

The Jewish Revolt of 67 C.E. had a catastrophic effect on the Jews of Palestine and changed the course of their history. The desecration of the Temple is not mentioned even casually anywhere. Jesus' prophecy of the "Abomination of Desolation" so much trumpeted in the Gospels(MK 13:14,MT 24:15,LK 21:20) when actually fulfilled was not considered to be worth recording. There is not a word in the whole New Testament about what happened to the Mother Church in the aftermath of this great tragedy. Did the Judo-Christians stand by their fellow Israelites? Anyhow, it was a good riddance; they were dead and gone and no more a source of worry for Paul and his adherents. The facts of life had now to be faced and the Gospel writers faced these hard facts squarely and without any inhibition. Their fantasies needed no bounds and they let them loose unchallenged.

Spread of "Christianity" into Alexandria, having a large community of Jews, and outward through whole of North Africa, is also not even alluded to in the New Testament. We do, however, know from later independent sources of a somewhat variant version flourishing in those non-European parts which later developed into Unitarianism posing a direct challenge to Pauline Church's later development of the Trinitarian doctrine.

THE VARIANT THEMES

The Gospels are admittedly hybrid compositions tailored to the needs of each community for whose immediate benefit these were written. The earliest of the four canonical Gospels, that of Mark, is generally considered to have been compiled in Rome for the congregation of the Gentile Christians there. In the aftermath of the Jewish Revolt and the Gentile suspicion and revulsion against the Jews it was necessary to dissociate Jesus from his Jewish origin and to conceal the stigma of his death on the Roman cross. The Gentiles could not be asked to believe in a Jewish Messiah fighting against the Gentiles. The Christians also expected the goodwill of the Roman government by distancing themselves from the hated Jews. In any case, there was no love lost between the (Pauline) Christians and the Jews.

Jesus is presented by Mark as having been misunderstood by his family, who think that he is out of his mind(MK 3:21), and by his disciples, who later forsook him. Peter denies him. "The Jews" — the pharisees, the Herodians and the High Priests — oppose him and destroy him. Jewish leaders and people deride their dying victim. The Roman Governor is shown as reluctant to crucify him because he is convinced that it was out of malice that "The Jews" were trying to get an innocent Jesus crucified. It is the Gentile Roman centurion who testifies to his divinity. Mark assures the Roman Christians that Jesus, though born a Jew, had no essential connection with Judaism and that he had endorsed the Roman rule("Pay to Caesar what is due to Caesar," MK 12:17). It is an apologia in which Mark refutes any accusation against Jesus of conduct inconsistent with his holy Messianic claim. The Apostles who continued the Jewish legacy and had posed a challenge to Paul's apostleship are denigrated and ridiculed as good for nothing so that Paul is left with an open field to carry on the "true" message of Jesus. While Paul, the doctrinaire, could gloss over Jesus' earthly sojourn and put emphasis on "The risen

Christ", Mark as a so-called historian could not easily get rid of the scandal of the Roman Cross and therefore edits, interpolates, interprets, conceals and even invents events trying to prove his case.

Once Mark had spun the web of the story of Jesus, it was not easy for Matthew and Luke to be free from its basic plot. They, however, had the advantage of being later and could thus add on or improve upon the original Markan version. Maybe they had some independent information on hand, perhaps it was the demands of their local environment, that the two Gospel writers produced their own versions.

Matthew presents Jesus as a pacifist who teaches forgiveness and non-violence, a shepherd of harassed and helpless sheep, who had come to take away their heavy load and provide relief. Those who resort to sword die with sword. This suited the environment of Alexandria where the Jews were now faced with the aftermath of the Jewish revolt. Some of the sicarii (extremist Zealots), who had escaped to there had been trying to rouse the Jews (and the Judo-Christians) against the Romans. They had to be brought into the Pauline teachings. Matthew assures the late-comers to full benefits (MT Ch20) in the kingdom of Heaven. Since the Jews had rejected the invitation to the Messianic banquet laid out for them the Gentiles would now benefit from it (MT Ch22). In the parable of the vineyard (MT Ch21) the vinegrowers kill the landowners son ("the son of God"). The landowner will now bring these bad ones (the Jews) to a bad end and give the vineyard to other tenants (the Gentiles). The "prophecy" had now been fulfilled. Matthew proclaims Jesus' innocence through a supernatural revelation to the Roman lady, Pilate's wife. Pilate himself makes a public disavowal of the responsibility of Jesus' death with an emphatic acceptance by the Jews: His blood be on us, and on our children" (MT 27:25).

Luke in his Gospel and its sequel of the Acts of the Apostles presents Jesus as a victim of Jewish conspiracy and Paul as the great protagonist for the spread of the good news. Jesus is shown to have vainly sought peace against rebel Jerusalem. Since it did not bear fruit this fruitless tree (the Jews) deserved cutting down (LK 13:6-9).

John who bears the standard of a more developed doctrine is highly anti-Jewish in his tone and presents Jesus as a victim of Jewish malignity. After all, how could the Messiah, the Lamb of God, saviour of all nations, be involved in politics of a local nature? He even rearranges events so that the "cleansing of the Temple" is carried out in the early part of Jesus' ministry so that it may seem to have no bearing Jewish decision to punish him. Jesus dies for the salvation of all nations.

We shall now analyse Gospel versions of some of the major events beyond the scope of the previous analysis to see what lies "between the lines" of the relevant Gospel narratives.

THE NATIVITY STORY

Almost every detail in the Nativity version, the foretelling by the astrologers, unrest of the ruler, murder of newborn innocents, miraculous escape, the flight to Egypt, bears a striking similarity to the Old Testament record about Moses. Add to it the forty days in wilderness for Jesus compared to forty years of Moses and you are nearer to the promised kingdom of Heaven in the promised land.

Only two of the Gospels, by Matthew and Luke, mention the all-so-important virgin birth. Mark seems ignorant about such a phenomenon. John the doctrinaire does not need to mention the paternity of the pre-existent "Word" that was. Paul the earliest writer does not even make any presumption about lack of paternity of Jesus and calls him "of the seed of David

according to the flesh"(Rom 1:3), "Of this man's(David's) seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus"(Acts 13:23).

Even the parents of Jesus are depicted to be ignorant of anything but a natural birth. For it is no son of a virgin whose divinely impregnated mother and foster father(duly informed by an angel) are astonished by child Jesus' reference to his Heavenly Father(LK 2:248-50). His family also does not consider him to be unusual; rather they feel that he was beside himself(MK 3:20- 21). "He came to his own and his own received him not"(JN 1:11- 13). Jesus' sinlessness based on his birth without a sexual act is also not justifiable. Libido, after all, is no more sinful than other natural urges and functions of men (or women).

TEACHINGS OF JESUS

To really understand Jesus' teachings we must first decipher the word "kingdom of God". On the surface this would seem to be a pious concept of an era where God's commandments are fully observed. We can also understand it to mean the imminence of the judgment of God against those who were not obedient to God's commandment. However in the perspective of Israel/Palestine of Jesus' days this clearly meant establishment of the sovereignty of Yahweh in the holy land occupied by heathen conquerors. The current Zealot refusal to the Roman tribute was not a secular objection to making payment; rather it was religious for it meant giving the resources of the land promised and granted by Yahweh to his chosen people; the "things of God" to a heathen lord. The re-establishment of Yahweh's sovereignty over the Holy Land, therefore, meant overthrowing of the existing political and social order.

Certain of the Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not"?...He knowing their hypocrisy said unto them...Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"(MK 12:13-17). This innocuous sounding statement has been recorded by Mark apparently to show that the heavenly Messiah had no objection to payment of tribute to the Romans, but was rather concerned only with the things of God. Actually Jesus' pronouncement was wholly in line with the Zealot teaching: "Do not pay out of the resources of Yahweh's land to the heathen Romans". We need to interpret in the light of another of Jesus' pronouncement: "Give not what is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you"(MT 7:6). He did remark to Peter: 'why then are their own people exempt(from paying the tribute)?' "(MT 17:26). This clearly reveals Jesus' own true feelings. Similarly, when Matthew quotes Jesus as saying: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"(11:12), he tries to give the impression as if the violent ones were the Zealots. With a little thought we can see what may indeed have been meant by Jesus: the violent ones were the Romans who had taken over Israel, the kingdom of heaven, by force!

Jesus' round-about way of telling things is understandable in view of large number of Roman (and those of the high priests) spies all around. He had to be careful and so "all these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them"(MT 13:34). Jesus himself gave the reason to be secretive: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand"(MT 13:11,13). What sort of a preacher was he who did not want his audience to understand him? — unless he was careful lest his secret be unnecessarily let out.

When he warned of the "abomination of desolation" he was in fact reminding them of Daniel's "overspreading of abominations"(Dan 9:27) where he was referring to profaning of the

Temple by the altar of Zeus which Antiochus Epiphanes erected therein in 167 B.C.E. Jesus was therefore warning the Jewish people in general, and his followers in particular, that unless they rise up and throw out the Romans they may again have to face a similar situation. This indeed happened in 39-40 C.E., not much later than the alleged crucifixion of Jesus, when Emperor Gaius tried to profane the Temple by proposing to erect his own image there. Before that could be done Gaius was assassinated which was seen by the Jews as divine judgment on the impious tyrant. It is significant that Matthew seems to be aware of Jesus' real message (MT 24:15) and he, or perhaps some later scribe, has recorded: "(Whoso readeth, let him understand)" and of course, the Gentile readers were not expected to easily understand the background concerned with the Jewish Old Testament.

According to Paul Jesus claims an authority rivalling and challenging Moses and even sets himself above Moses. Jesus felt himself in a position to over-ride, with an unparalleled sovereign freedom, from the words of the Torah and the authority of Moses. Can one reject what is holy and basic in Judaism and remain a Jew? The answer is obvious 'No.' Could, then, Jesus have rejected what is holy and basic in Judaism and remain a Jew? The answer to this question must also be an emphatic 'No.' How could, then, Jesus "annul the law with its regulations" (Eph 2:15)? How could Jesus set himself above Moses and remain a rabbi? — since a rabbi's authority is derived from Moses. Jesus was certainly a Jew and made assumptions of Jewish piety. Paul therefore invented the "risen Christ" who had no association with Jesus of history, who had been born and grew up among fellow Jews, was baptised by and carried on the mission of John the Baptist telling the Jewish people to "repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (MK 1:14, MT 4:17).

But this kingdom could be achieved only by Jehovah's land being cleansed of the Roman yoke. The greatest sin was to be subservient to the heathens and the highest priority was to carry on the struggle. Everything else must wait. "Let the dead bury its dead" (M7 8:21-22). The time has come to take up arms. Kingdom of God is near, at hand. "Follow me."

He asked his disciples to sell everything (MT 19:21, LK 12:33). His demand for poverty went beyond practicality: ravens do not sow yet they get their food (LK 12:24), lilies of the field do not spin yet are gorgeously attired (LK 12:27) you cannot add a cubit to your stature (LK 12:25) take no thought for the morrow (MT 6:34). Leave everything to God, seek the kingdom of heaven (LK 12:21), have no fear (LK 12:32), with loins girded (LK 12:32). Follow me.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (LK 11:21). "If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also" (LK 12:39-40). "Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" (LK 12:41). Jesus does not answer plainly but later in the dialogue he stated: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled suppose ye I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, there will be heat and it comes to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (LK 12:49-56).

To the ordinary minds his commandments may sometime look too harsh. He demanded uncritical obedience. Unless you are born again (JN 3:3), or become like simple children (MT 18:3) ye cannot enter kingdom of Heaven. He had to expect unwavering loyalty. No army can hope to win with lax discipline. To be a disciple of Jesus meant to follow him by renouncing everything. He called Simon (Peter) and his brother to his discipleship and straightway they followed him leaving whatever they were doing (MT 4:20). So did the Zebedee brothers. So did Levi, even though he was sitting at the receipt of custom (MK 2:14). Even his last command to Peter in John's Gospel was: Follow thou me (JN 21:22).

It is surprising that pre-Gospel writers of the New Testament, notably Paul and James, do not mention any of Jesus' ethical teachings as originating from him. They themselves have advices for their audience, many times of similar nature as Jesus' own teachings, yet do not relate them to those of the Lord's commandments. This is most surprising. Could it be that Jesus' actual career was different from what is depicted in the Gospels which were designed to conceal any anti-Gentile teachings and actions?

Many of Jesus' actions seem to be in conflict with his own teachings of purity of heart: "If any will not receive you shake the dust off your shoes" (MT 10:14-15), "whosoever blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost is guilty of an eternal sin" (MK 3:29), outbursts against Pharisees and Scribes: Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, etc. (MT 23:33), his overturning of the tables in the Temple yard (MK 11:15, JN 2:15), his woes to Capernaum and other cities (MK 2:17, MT 9:12, LK 5:31-32), and drowning of the herd of swine (LK 8:28-33), do not seem to be the actions of a pacifist.

Although he advocated poverty, he let "a woman" pour out a costly oil (MT 26:11) over his head (or feet, whatever). Time was ripe to march to Jerusalem. Nothing else mattered anymore.

SELECTING THE TWELVE

The struggle against the Romans could not be carried out by mere words of pacifism. So he warned: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (MT 10:34). He saw the multitudes and "was moved with compassion with them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (MT 9:36-38). He also advised them: "he who is not against you is on your side" (LK 9:50). [Although, he is also quoted as saying: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (LK 11:23). But this was at a later, more mature, stage of his preparations against the Romans].

In Matthew's Gospel it is after this that Jesus selected "The Twelve" and "these twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them, saying, Go not unto the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (MT 10:5-7). In those days without radio and television and other means of communication this was the only way of spreading the message. So the message went out to the Jews to get ready. The message obviously had to be kept secret from the Gentiles and the Samaritans lest the Romans get any inkling. Later he sent seventy-two of his disciples, two by two, to carry out the same task (LK 10:1). At this stage he specifically told them not to carry any thing, "nor even staves" (MT 10:20) lest they rouse any suspicion. To his own disciples he also warned that in case the things precipitated earlier than the resistance had been properly organised, and the "abomination of desolation" was imminent, "let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" which meant going into the wilderness to wage a guerrilla warfare.

It is significant that Jesus came from Galilee and, therefore, could not but have been influenced by Zealotism. Among the Twelve of his emissaries was Simon, the Zealot. The Aramaic word for Zealot was QANNA! which may have been mistakenly [or, was it deliberate?] rendered into Greek as KANANAIOS. Thus 'Simon the Canaanite' was actually "Simon the Zealot". He may well have been from Cana (in Galilee). Indeed TLB (MT 10:2-4, LK 6:14-16) does record him as "Simon (a member of 'The Zealots', a subversive political party)".

Under MK(3:16-19) he is described as "(a member of a political party advocating violent overthrow of the Roman government)". The fact that Jesus chose a professed Zealot for an apostle indicates that, despite later Christian claims about his pacifism, he saw nothing incompatible between the profession of Zealotism and his own movement. Peter was called "Barjona"(MT 16:17). This Aramaic word was deliberately not translated in the Greek manuscripts for it meant "Terrorist", 'outlaw', 'anarchist', or plainly Zealot. [Bar Jona would mean "son of Jona" and Gospels prefer to use it in that manner. However, his brother is not called "Andrew Bar Jona because it was Simon(Peter/Cephas) who was Barjona]. The two Zebedee brothers, John and James, were called "Boanerges", or sons of Thunder". Judas Iscariot may indeed be 'Judas the Sicarius', the one who carried the dreadful killing knife Sicarii, a very dedicated Zealot [His betrayal for just thirty pieces of silver seems most implausible and far-fetched].

"Of all the Simons populating the New Testament, the most important is unquestionably Simon Peter, the most famous of Jesus' disciples and the one on whom Jesus allegedly founds his church. The Gospels themselves make it plain that he is not 'Simon Peter' but, rather, 'Simon called Peter'. 'Peter', in fact, is not a name but a nickname, another sobriquet. It simply means 'rock-like', implying 'tough'. A modern equivalent would, indeed, be 'Rocky'. If Peter is actually a 'tough' whose nickname means Rocky, is it not possible to equate him with the fierce individual known as Simon Zelotes...? If Jesus' most important disciple was a Zealot, the implications become extremely interesting"(Michael Baigent, et. al.: The Messianic Legacy).

In Jesus' own case it is significant to note that the Jews had accused that "he stirreth up the people teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place"(LK 23:5) "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar"(LK 23:2). Pilate was jolted by the mere mention of the word "Galilee", the hotbed of Zealot conspiracies. He immediately inquired if the accused was "a Galilean"(LK 23:6) and thus possibly be a Zealot. He was not in good terms with Herod and it must have been more so because of the Zealot threat arising out of the territory under Herod's jurisdiction. To score his point, and not for reason of lack of his own jurisdiction, he sends Jesus to Herod who was not the one to admit his lack of control in his own realm. So he mocks at Jesus as a madman, arrays him in a gorgeous robe and sends him back to Pilate indicating that there was no problem in Galilee. Any other admission would have been ruinous for Herod himself.

It is obvious that Jesus' disciples went around armed. In fact he asked them to be so: "he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one"(LK 22:36). His disciples told him "Lord, behold, here are two swords, And he said unto them, It is enough"(LK 22:37-38). By saying "it is enough" it is not necessary that Jesus was naive and felt satisfied with just two sword, rather that he taunted his disciples not to make too much noise about it: "do not say too much, it is enough said already". At Gethsemane he told Peter, James and John to keep a watch while he prayed(MK 14:34).

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA

John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel does not seem to believe that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and that immediately thereafter he went into wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the Devil(MK 1:12, MT 4:1, LK 4:1). According to him Jesus is recognized by John as the Son of God(JN 1:34) and the Lamb of God(JN 1:36). Two disciples follow Jesus. One of them is Andrew, brother of Simon bar Jona. Andrew introduces him to Simon, whom Jesus nicknames Cephas(stone/rock; Greek, Petros; English, Peter). "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee"(JN 1:43) "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana in Galilee, and

the mother of Jesus was there; and Jesus was called to the marriage, and his disciples too. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith to him, they have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Women, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there was set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim... When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine ... (JN 2:1-9).

According to William MacDonald (The Gospel of John, Emmaus Correspondence School): "The reply of the Lord seems to us to be very cold and distant. But it is not as strong a rebuke as would seem [a rebuke, nevertheless — Author]. The word "woman" used here is a title of respect, similar to our word "lady". When the lord asked, "What have I to do with thee?" He indicated that in the performance of His divine mission (?) He was not subject to instructions from His mother, but acted entirely in obedience to the will of His Father in heaven [Yet we do not know if Jesus received any instructions to perform the desired miracle! — Author]. The expression "What have I to do with thee?" occurs several times in the Bible. It means "What have we in common?" The answer implied is, "Nothing". David used it twice with respect to his cousins, the sons of Zeruiah ... Elisha used it in II Kings 3 to express how deep was the gulf between him and Jehoram the son of Ahab. Three times the demons, by using the same expression, reveal how Satan has nothing in common with Christ, or Christ with Satan".

On the first day of his meeting with John (at baptism?) Jesus' only disciples seem to be Andrew, his brother Simon (Peter) and possibly one more unknown person. The day following, while in Galilee, Jesus "findeth Philip" (JN 1:43) and "Philip findeth Nathanael" (JN 1:45). Thus when Jesus arrived in Cana the next day he may have had just four or five companions. The guests previously assembled seem to have had their fill of wine so much so that nothing was left for the late comers. So why convert as much as six waterpots full of water into wine? Each jar was supposed to hold "twenty to thirty gallons" (NEB) which makes it 120 to 180 gallons of wine. Is John making a mountain out of a molehill or was it indeed a very large number of "disciples" who accompanied Jesus, in which case one can afford to be somewhat inquisitive.

Gospels differ at the location of the place of baptism. John tells us that it was "in Bethabara beyond Jordan" (JN 1:28) which is about 25 miles south of Bethsaida, "the city of Andrew and Peter" [and Philip and Nathanael] (JN 1:44). Cana would be more than 30 miles from Bethsaida.

However if we believe Matthew (3:1) the baptism took place further in the south in "the wilderness of Judaea" where John the Baptist was supposed to be preaching. It would be a miracle by itself that Jesus traversed a distance of (much) more than a hundred miles, on foot, in one day to Bethsaida. Or, did Jesus, Andrew, Peter and others, use fast horses [of which we know nothing] to reach Galilee? This would require elaborate preparation beforehand with fresh horses being available every 20 miles or so. Was all this only to "find" Philip and Nathanael (who was from Cana anyway) and to attend a wedding at Cana the next day? Or, was there more to this "wedding"? Was Jesus, in fact, on a special (secret) mission (for the Zealots)?

There is some speculation that the wedding in Cana may possibly have been Jesus' own (belated, at the age of 30 (LK 3:23)). Seen in this context one can understand the concern of Jesus' mother about the shortage of wine for the guests and Jesus' rebuke to his mother for her lack of planning and his (miraculous) action to provide wine. [A number of books have been written on the possibility of Jesus having a wife and a "holy bloodline", e.g. "Holy Blood, Holy Grail"

and "The Messianic Legacy" both by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln. However, we are not speculating on it in our present discussion].

Place of baptism is not the only detail in which various Gospels differ. While John says that Andrew first saw Jesus and then brought Simon, all in Bethabara, according to Mark as Jesus "walked by the sea of Galilee" [much to the north of Bethabara], he saw Simon and Andrew. This happened after Jesus' forty days in wilderness and the episode of temptation by Satan and after John had been put in prison(MK 1:14). This is followed by induction of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Philip comes much later(MK 3:18). There is no Nathanael. Matthew also confirms that Peter and Andrew were inducted as Jesus was "walking by the sea of Galilee"(MT 4:18). According to Luke this happened by the lake of Gen-nesa-rat(5:1) i.e. see of Galilee Lake Tiberias. Andrew is not even mentioned.

It is significant that while the three synoptic Gospels name Simon The Zealot(the Cana-anite, or from Cana) John does not mention this name but that of Nathanael of Cana-in-Galilee. Could Nathanael be Simon the Zealot? In which case he could be the host of the secret meeting.

SECRET PREPARATIONS:

Jesus is known to have had secret meetings and journeys with his disciples: "And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee, and he would not that any man should know it"(MK 9:30-31). During one of such meetings he is reported to have told them that "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him"(MK 10:34; MT 20:38; LK 18:33)". It is likely that he may have discussed his plans and mentioned the likelihood of being killed in action. He may have also decided on the secret rendezvous in Galilee for those who may survive an insurrection(MT 28:7). He commanded his followers "let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning". Peter was not certain yet, so he asked: "Lord, speakest thou this parable to us, or even to all?"(LK 12:41). Peter seems to be interested to know if this was a general call up for insurrection. Jesus was obviously not interested with the vested interests of higher classes who would side with the Romans, So he declared: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"(MK 2:17; MT 9:13).

The sight of people moved him with pity: they were like sheep, harassed, and helpless"(MT 9:36). On his extensive journeys Jesus exhorted people to unite: "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand"(MK 3:24-25, MT 12:25-26; LK 11:17). He reminded them that "If Satan rise up against himself, and he divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end"(MK 3:26, LK 11:18). "No servant can serve two masters . . . you cannot serve God and mammon"(LK 16:13). He could not be specific but people must have understood that by Satan/Mammon he obviously meant the Romans.

His use of parables was an understandable caution. However, he promised that "the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in parables"(JN 16:25). Peter's query in LK(12:41) quoted above is obviously appropriate. Was Jesus telling his disciples that very soon the insurrection will be in the open and there will be no more need for use of secret codes? Unfortunately his mission was prematurely cut off and he never could talk to them except in parables and very little after his "resurrection".

It is possible that the story of transfiguration(MK 9:2; MT 17:2; LK 9:29) was actually a secret meeting with some fellow rebel leaders. Soon afterwards he tells his disciples: "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already"(MT 17:11-12). This was a signal to indicate that time was coming soon to launch the movement for

throwing out the Romans. No wonder Peter, John and James who were present at the occasion "kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen"(LK 9:36). Indeed this they did on the bidding of Jesus himself(MT 17:9). "Many believed in his name but Jesus did not commit himself unto them"(JN 23-24). He could not afford to trust just anyone! Jesus must have been aware of the danger for "Jesus no more walked in Jewry [Judaea] but walked in Galilee"(JN 7:2), "Jesus left Judaea and went into wilderness"(JN 7:2). Even Nicodemus had come to him secretly at night(JN 7:2).

Jesus was aware that any premature action could end in disaster. Therefore many a time he asked his followers "not to tell anyone"(e.g.MT 9:30,12:16,16:20; LK 5:14,8:15,56). He even "charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ". But it was obviously impossible to keep secret the preparations of such an insurrection so "they talked about him all over the country-side"(MK 7:16;MT 9:31). Indeed they wanted to declare him "king"(JN 6:15) After all, was not the Messiah to be the king of the Jews? But Jesus was not in any haste and waited for the right time for his assault on Jerusalem. In the meantime he cautioned his disciples not to provoke the Romans prematurely. According to Luke(13:1-3), "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish". The incident referred to had occurred at an earlier Passover when Pilate's soldiers brutally suppressed an uprising [See the section on "Pontius Pilate" later in this Chapter]. Jesus cleverly tells his listeners to realize that unless they unite to fight the Roman occupation army, they too will perish similarly. He warned his disciples: I am come to send fire on earth, and will I, if it already kindled?"(LK 12:49).

He asked Peter: "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, then are their children free [NEB: Why then their own people are exempt?]. Clearly he was pointing out the unfairness of Roman taxation and the need to throw away the yoke.

According to John's account which does not tally with that of the other three(Synoptic) Gospels or any other known source, Jesus made several visits to Jerusalem. At one occasion his brothers were going to the festival of the Feast of Tabernacles and wished him to accompany them but he excused himself by saying: "My time is not yet come"(JN 7:6). Yet after his brothers had left he too went but almost secretly. When he came to Jerusalem people wondered if "the rulers know indeed that this is the Christ? "Jesus for his part would not trust himself to them"(JN 2:24).In fact he was careful to "not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him"(JN 7:1). Herod too was inclined to kill him(LK 13:31). Indeed he "walked no more openly among the Jews but went thence into a country near to the wilderness"(JN 11:54). Yet he decided to go to Jerusalem, not secretly, but with a lot of fanfare. "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them. But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one"(LK 22:35-36). On his way he passed through Samaria but, understandably, the Samaritans "received him not because his face was as though he was going to Jerusalem"(LK 9:53).

When Jesus sent out the Twelve he asked them to go only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"(MT 10:6). It is significant that he told them: "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another"(MT 10:16-23), "I came not to send

peace, but a sword"(MT 10:34), "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me"(MT 10:38). Obviously this was not a mere evangelist mission.

ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

"He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear"(LK 19:11). Elaborate arrangements seems to have been made beforehand for a proper entry into Jerusalem. Except at the time of his entry into Jerusalem there is no instance in the whole New Testament of Jesus riding an animal. This time, however, he wanted to enter in the manner of the Jewish kings and made prior arrangements for it. He thus entered Jerusalem riding on a colt(MK 11:7, LK 19:35). John attests that it was a young ass(JN 12:14). Interestingly, Matthew says two beasts "an ass and a colt" were arranged(MT 21:2) and Jesus was set on these(MT 21:7). How he rode two of these together remains a mystery.

As Jesus marched into Jerusalem with his followers, people were greatly excited and were singing: Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, Hosanna in the highest". They laid tree branches and garments on the way [A red carpet treatment!]. People "thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear"(LK 19:11). Some even shouted: "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest"(LK 19:38). According to John they called him "king of Israel"(JN 12:13). Some of the Pharisees obviously objected: "Master, rebuke thy disciples"(LK 19:39), but he would not do so since it was now time for assault on Jerusalem. It is significant that just about this time Jesus declared: "Those mine enemies, which would not that I shall reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me"(LK 19:27). He also declared: "And whosoever shall offend one of these small ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea"(MK 9:42). This was the time when Jesus, the divinely ordained Prophet, should lead his subjugated, captivated, exploited, enslaved nation of the Israelites in their struggle for freedom from alien rule. Kingdom of heaven was at hand

"CLEANSING" THE TEMPLE

According to Mark(11:11) after entering Jerusalem Jesus went straight to the Temple and because it was evening time he went away. Next day he came again "and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of them that sold doves. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple"(MK 11:15-16). However, Matthew(21:12) and Luke(19:45) record that this happened as soon as he entered Jerusalem. For John this happened on an earlier visit and he brings Jesus to Jerusalem a number of times in the last years of his earthly mission except, interestingly, in the year 29 C.E. the year in which a number of Galileans were involved in an insurrection which was subdued by Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator. [Did John omit it deliberately to avoid any suspicion of Jesus having been involved? Was Jesus in fact involved?] We shall revert to this later. For the present, we must dismiss John's version as implausible and illogical, irrespective of the quality even of the versions given by the three Synoptic Gospels.

It is surprising that Jesus chose to upset the normal business being carried out within the Temple premises. Firstly, all that activity was not inside the Temple and therefore no sacrilege was being perpetrated. Secondly, such activities were indeed necessary for carrying out the religious rites. The official Roman coins carried effigy of the Emperor and it was religiously prohibitive to carry these into the Temple. It was therefore necessary that these be exchanged with the special Temple currency. People who came from other places like Galilee

also needed to exchange the Herodian coins with the local coins. Hence the money changers were a necessary part of the Temple activities. Buying and selling of doves and other sacrificial animals was needed to be located near the Temple. Carrying of water for supply to houses was also nothing unusual in Jerusalem located on a height and many water carriers, mostly women, would not be an offensive or even undesirable sight. Why did then Jesus choose to upset normal activity in order to 'cleanse the Temple'? or did he? This raises several issues.

The money-changing and selling of sacrificial animals was authorised, and benefited from, by the Jewish high priests. Jesus, therefore, may have been showing his anger against, or perhaps challenging the authority of, the Temple authorities. While doing so he declared: "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but you have made it a den of thieves"(MK 11:17) but MT 21:13 and LK 19:46 mention "My house is the house of prayer" and do not include "of all nations". [That would anyway have meant "Jews from all over the world"— No Gentiles!] Where were Jesus' companions and the crowd which had hailed his arrival only moments ago? Did they also partake in this activity? Where was the Temple police while all this commotion was taking place? Or, did the authorities of the Temple-state deliberately restrain themselves for fear that a greater riot might take place? For the present, some did ask him under what authority he had acted thus. According to Mark(11:33) Matthew(21:27) and Luke(20:8) he refused to tell, but John records that "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"(JN 2:19). The Gospel narrations regarding Jesus continuing teaching in the Temple area is an apologetic cover-up to indicate as if nothing objectionable had really happened.

Secretly the Temple authorities decided to arrest Jesus possibly quietly after the crowds had dispersed after the festival to avoid further rioting(MK 14:2;MT 26:5; LK 19:48). They took counsel and said "if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. "One of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not...Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death(JN 11:48-50,53). It is apparant that more than anything else they were concerned that if Jesus' seditious activities got out of hand, the Romans may try to subdue the ensuing uprising with heavy hand. For that reason they proceeded to arrest him.

Jesus' action, if it were to purify the priesthood, would be consistent with his Messianic mission. Overturning of vendors' tables could be his demonstration against the material aspects of the activities of the high priest, who was to be the vicegerant of Yahweh on earth but was actually the nominee of the heathen Rome. Any action against this Roman nominee was indeed a challenge to Rome and likely to come to the notice of the Roman authorities. It is this aspect of Jesus' action that particularly worried the Temple authorities who were required to maintain proper order within their jurisdiction.

THE ARREST AT GETHSEMANE

After the insurrection at the Temple proved abortive Jesus and his trusted companions gathered at a secret hideout to eat the Passover meal. Elaborate arrangements seem to have been made for this purpose. Although it was customary to eat the Passover with family and friends who had accompanied him throughout his journey from Galilee, we see no family members, not even Mary the mother of Jesus, no other women, none of his brothers, just the inner circle of his trusted disciples. From there they decided to slip out of the city and meet in "the garden of Gethsemane"(MK 14:32;MT 26:34) "across the Kedron brook"(JN 18:1), on "the Mount

of Olives"(LK 22:39). Gospels differ even on the actual location of the place where Jesus was arrested! On arrival there Jesus started to pray, asking "Peter and the two sons of Zebedee" "larry ye here, and watch with me"(MT 26:37,38). This was time to be careful.

It is stated by the Gospels that Judas betrayed his spiritual master for a paltry sum of thirty pieces(about fifteen ounces of silver). This seems an obviously ridiculous and preposterous insinuation against a possible "Sicarii", a diehard Zealot. As Josephus, the Jewish historian himself records inspite of his anti-Zealot(he calls them "Iestai", bandits) and pro-Roman allegiance:

"For under every form of torture and laceration of body, devised for sole subject of making them acknowledge Caesar as lord(Kaisera despoten), not one submitted nor was brought to the verge of utterance; but all kept their resolve, triumphant over constraint, meeting the tortures and the fire the bodies that seemed insensible of pain and souls that well nigh exulted in it. But most of all were the spectators struck by the children of tender age, not one of whom could be prevailed upon to call Caesar lord. So far did the strength of the courage rise superior to the weakness of their frames".

Some people theorise that rather than sell off for money, Judas Iscariot may have tried to provoke Jesus to action. However, with the present analysis this seems not to be the case because the insurrection had already proved abortive. It is more likely that Judas got himself arrested in place of Jesus to save his leader.

Suddenly "a great multitude with swords and staves"(MK 14:43,MT 26:47), "a multitude"(LK 22:47), "a band of men and officers...with lanterns and torches and weapons"(JN 18:3) appeared on the scene and proceeded to arrest Jesus. Jesus' companions who were obviously armed put up a futile resistance but faced with the superior force they had to retreat. Jesus is said to have been arrested and taken to Jerusalem. Peter seems to be the only one who followed, at a distance(MK 14:54; MT 26:58; LK 22:54). According to John(18:15) "another disciple" known unto the high priest "also went and took Peter into the palace of the high priest where Jesus was taken.

It is noteworthy that Jews were not allowed to carry swords in (and around) Jerusalem during the Passover — yet Jesus' companions were carrying swords in Gethsemane. At some other occasion his disciples were accused of plucking corn on a Sabbath day and Jesus defended them by quoting the example of David who not only ate the holy Shewbread from the altar (lawful only for the priests to eat) but also gave it to his soldiers. On both these occasions Jesus' party was following the dispensation for the soldiers on the march(MK 2:23-28).

The suggestion of an "insurrection" also stems from the fact that the Jewish and/or Roman authorities did not send merely ten or twenty police officials to arrest Jesus. "In the Vulgate, as in certain modern translations, the term used for those who came to arrest Jesus is correctly translated and considerably more precise. Jesus, one learns, is arrested in Gethsemane not by an indeterminate "number of men", but by a 'cohort'. Is this a pedantic inconsistency, or does it reflect something more consequential? "If one goes back to Greek, one will find the term SPEIRAN, a precise translation of 'Cohort'. In modern English the term 'Cohort' is vague, implying a fairly large but still non-specific number. But for the writers and early translators of the Greek it was a very precise term, denoting a very exact figure. Just as modern armies are organised into companies, battalions, regiments, brigades and divisions, so the Roman Army was organised into centuries, cohorts and legions. A Roman legion was somewhat larger than a modern peacetime brigade in the British Army — six thousand troops. A cohort was one tenth of a legion, six hundred soldiers. That is if they were regular Roman soldiers. A cohort composed of auxiliaries, as those in the Holy Land were, would number at least five hundred troops, and sometimes as many as two thousand seven hundred and sixty infantry and one thousand two hundred and forty cavalry"(Michael Baigent, et.el.: The Messianic Legacy, pp. 49). Was such a

large force sent to arrest a peaceful preacher accompanied by no more than eleven disciples and may be a couple of others?

A similar question is raised about the number of Roman soldiers (besides the Jewish police) who carried out Jesus' crucifixion. The synoptic Gospels give the impression that there were only a few soldiers, John is specific: four soldiers (19:23). However, Luke leaks the information about the presence of a 'centurion'. This means that there were at least 100 Roman soldiers present at Calvary/Golgotha. This would be ridiculous unless the Romans really feared another riot over the crucifixion of a person whose followers must be armed and likely to resist the action.

THE TRIAL BY THE JEWS

The Gospels differ from each other on many details of the trial of Jesus by the Jews. According to Mark (14:53) "all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes" were already assembled at the palace of the high priest, at about midnight in anticipation of the trial. Witnesses had already been arranged. They accused Jesus of having threatened to destroy the Temple. Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing (MK 14:61). The Council (Sanhedrin) apparently found the witnesses to be false and the charge to be incorrect. The fact that the Council formally met, was presented with evidence of witnesses and found them false does indicate that the Council members were not patently biased against Jesus as the Gospels would have us believe.

Having failed on the first charge, Jesus was asked by the high priest: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am... Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, what need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: What think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (MK 14:61-64). Again on the next morning "the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate (MK 15:1).

There are serious questions about Mark's version of the Sanhedrin meeting at midnight and condemning Jesus to death. Sanhedrin was an official body and should have met at its appropriate meeting place in the Temple and not in the high priest's palace. A nocturnal meeting would be highly irregular. That the words "the Son of the Blessed", or their Aramaic equivalent, were actually uttered by the high priest is most improbable; the basic monotheism of Judaism precluded such a relationship even for the Messiah. The Messiah was not expected to be a Son of God, literally. In earlier cases of other Messianic pretenders whom Josephus records none were adjudged worthy of death for blasphemy. Customary death for blasphemy was by stoning. Having condemned Jesus to death what then was the need for another "consultation" next morning? If the decision was made by the whole Council and all of them agreed on it then were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus also a party to it?

"Gamaliel, a doctor of law, had a reputation among all the people" (Acts 5:34) and had been a teacher of Saul/Paul (Acts 22:3). In similar allegations against the apostles after Jesus' so-called crucifixion he mentioned "Theudas, boasting himself somebody [MESSIAH]; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee [the founder of Zealotism] in the days of taxing [census], and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were disposed" (Acts 5:36-37). Where was Gamaliel at the time of Jesus' trial? Did he also agree to condemnation of Jesus? Why did he not mention the name of Jesus as well during his above quoted speech?

As a rule Sanhedrin did not give an urgent verdict. It was normally given at least one day after the trial. Could this be the reason Mark has a nocturnal meeting and a morning "counsel"? As we shall notice later other Gospels do not agree with his two meeting version. A meeting or a verdict was also not given on festivals, which were ritually busy days, as well as rather sanctified and not allowed to be messed with earthly matters. After all, what was the urgency—unless, of course, the temple authorities quickly got hold of Jesus after the insurrection and after mutual consultation, without a proper trial, sent him to the Roman governor to try for sedition. In that case it must be presumed that no charge of blasphemy must have been involved.

Matthew follows the theme as presented by Mark but Luke records that there was no trial at night but "as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and let him into their council"(LK 22:66). The only charge laid against Jesus in the council was that of blasphemy. The Gentile Gospel writer did not want to give any impression that Jesus may have been involved in an anti-Roman(anti-Gentile) insurrection. The council passes no judgment but "the whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate"(LK 23:1). This is obviously rather odd.

According to John there was no trial by the Jewish council. Jesus was taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest. Annas "asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine"(JN 18:19). Not having been satisfied with his answer, "Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest"(JN 18:24). It seems that Caiaphas did not ask any questions but "led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment"(JN 18:28), unless we take it that the original interrogation was done by Caiaphas and not Annas. The language of the Gospel is rather garbled.

PETER'S DENIAL

Each Gospel gives a different version of the episode of Peter's denial of any knowledge of Jesus and the crowing of the cock. What is, however, relevant is Peter's location at the time of the trial. It is reported that "he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire"(MK 14:54) "beneath in the palace"(MK 14:66). Matthew records that "Peter sat without in the palace"(MT 26:69) and therefore did not observe the trial. Luke places Peter right in the midst of the hall(LK 22:55) where Jesus was kept during the night before the trial that was held in the morning. After Peter's third denial the lord turned and looked upon Peter(LK 22:61). In John's Gospel "Peter stood at the door without" until he was brought in by "another disciple who was known unto the high priest"(JN 18:15) and the servants and officers stood there, who made a fire of coals, for it was cold; and they warmed themselves and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself(JN 18:18).

It is interesting that Peter is recognised by someone on account of being a Galilean, "and thy speech agreeth thereto", (MK 14:70). Surprisingly a maid also recognises him as having seen him with Jesus(MK 14:67; MT 26:69) and by another maid(Mt 26:71; LK 22:56, JN 17:17). Someone "being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off(JN 18:25) also recognises as having seen him in the garden with Jesus. It is surprising that inspite of all these people recognising Peter, especially, as the one who wielded his sword to cut off someone's ear, no action is taken against Peter. Did Peter really follow Jesus or has the episode been inserted to belittle Peter as being a coward?

Incidentally, the keeping of chickens was allowed in Jerusalem only if these were given no opportunity to flock together. It was feared that chicken droppings would promote the growth of worms considered as "unclean animals", and thus profane the holy city. Crowing of a

cock must therefore have been very unusual. Since the alleged crucifixion is said to have taken place on Friday, the 13th of April, it is odd that it was so cold at night in Jerusalem as warranting need for fire for warming up. Apparently it was not too cold as we know that at least one young man was scantily clad out in the open "having a linen cloth cast about his naked body"(MK 14:51).

The beloved disciple, is the only possibly non-Galilean disciple recognised in the Gospel and even though he accompanies, or rather brings in, Peter into high priest's palace, no one says "you too are a Galilean". While he is beloved, and keeps on boasting about it throughout the Gospel, he is not one of the chosen. He could well be Jesus' secret contact in Jerusalem who may have arranged the ass/colt as well as the large room for the Last Supper. He could also be the liaison with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Thus it is most unlikely that it was John Zebedee who was a simple fisherman from Galilee.

THE ROMAN TRIAL

Synoptic Gospels do not mention the place where Jesus was delivered to Pilate but John tells us that "then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment and it was early and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover"(JN 18:28). [It is odd that while the three Synoptic Gospels attest that Jesus ate the Passover meal the night before, John says that the feast was yet to be. According to John 'the Last Supper' was held "before the feast of the Passover"(JN13:1) at the house of Mary and Martha at Bethany].

As per Mark(15:2) it was as if Pilate already knew that Jesus claimed to be "king of the Jews". Chief priests made several allegations but Jesus answered nothing so "Pilate marvelled"(MK 15.5). We are not told as to what was it that Pilate marvelled about. Mark follows this by the governor's offer to release a prisoner. So we get the impression that Pilate wondered about Jesus' innocence. Matthew follows the same line. Luke tells us that the Jewish leaders accused Jesus "saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying that he himself is Christ, a king"(LK 23:2). They further said that "he stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place"(LK 23:5). There is no allegation about blasphemy, which makes nonsense of the very situation it is supposed to be describing.

Pilate having learned that Jesus was a Galilean and therefore belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, "who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time"(LK 23:7). This is illogical. Even though Jesus was a Galilean he was also accused of forbidding to pay tribute in the land under Roman rule. Luke apparently wanted to include Jewish king Herod among those who did not like Jesus and yet, according to Pilate even Herod did not find Jesus guilty of sedition.

John makes the whole affair rather ridiculous. In order to hear the case Jesus had been led into the judgment hall but the Jewish leaders stayed out, Pilate comes out to ask them 'what accusation bring ye against this man? They answered, and said unto him, if he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews, therefore, said unto him, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death(JN 18:29-31). Thus the Jews lay no specified charges and also plead lack of authority over the case. This passage again raises several questions. Firstly, would Pilate, the Roman procurator, a representative of the great Roman Emperor come out of his palace to hear accusations against Jesus just because the Jews would not want to come into his palace as they consider him and his palace as profane? He could have sent some of his junior

functionaries. Or, the Jews could have sent a (non-Jew) emissary. Pilate spoke Greek and most Jews in Jerusalem including Jesus did not understand it. There must have been interpreters and lawyers to assist in the trial. Yet Pilate is made to move in and out, against his conscience, desire, and will, and against his wife's premonition, to please the Jews and convince them that they should not insist on the crucifixion of Jesus. It is also not likely that Jesus had been stirring unrest and Pilate had no prior knowledge about it through the widespread Roman spy network. In fact Jews seem to have had the support of Roman soldiers when they arrested Jesus. The answer of the Jews is also impertinent and haughty not expected under the circumstances.

Did Sanhedrin have authority to condemn people to death? It seems that they did have it for the subjects under their jurisdiction, especially blasphemy, for which the penalty was death by stoning. They did invoke this authority when "they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (MK 14:64). So how come they said "it is not lawful for us to put any man to death"? When Pilate asked them to "Judge him according to your law" he must have understood that the accusation must be of religious nature. He was not sure of the accusation for he again asks them "why, what evil hath he done?" (MK 15:19; MT 27:23; LK 23:22). Pilate's role is also ludicrous for he becomes aware that Jesus had been pretending to be the King of the Jews (JN 18:23) and yet is unaware of the "evil he hath done". In order to get out of his dilemma Pilate offers to release Jesus as part of an uncertain custom. How naive of him to try to please the Jews by releasing Jesus as a special favour when they wanted him to be crucified. All this seems illogical and ludicrous. "Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired" (MK 15:6 MT 27:15). "(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast" (LK 23:17). "Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover" (JN 18:39). It is given as if Pilate was obliged to release a prisoner at Passover according to the wishes of the Jews. There is no record of such a custom. In any case Pilate offers to release Jesus as part of that custom but "the Jews" demand release of Barabbas. At this point "a crowd" is suddenly introduced. How did they come? Did they come to ask for the release of a prisoner? They have a choice between Jesus who had attacked the Temple, and Barabbas "who for a sedition made in the city and for murder was cast into prison" (LK 23:19) "which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection" (MK 15:7), "a notable prisoner" (MT 27:16), "a robber" (JN 18:40). It is interesting that Josephus uses the word bandit (robber, lestai) for Zealots. It is inconceivable that Pilate would even consider releasing such a prisoner who had killed a Roman soldier.

What the Gospel writers want to conceal is that most probably a concurrent two-pronged attack had been made in the city. One by Jesus on the Temple and the other by Barabbas on the Roman citadel, Antonia, overlooking the Temple. Both proved abortive. If Jesus was crucified, as alleged, then two other bandits (lestai) were also crucified with him, one on each side of him. Was Jesus too considered a "lestai" by the Roman governor so that he ordered crucifixion of all the three together? After all we are also not told anything about the trial of these two "lestai".

"The crowd" insists that Barabbas be released. Pilate is made to look ridiculous and helpless by asking them "what will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the king of the Jews?" (MK 15:12). This lame question was an inexcusable tactical blunder and shows that Pilate was unsure of himself and at the mercy of the Jews. The implication is that he had not only to accede to the release of Barabbas but was obliged also to consult them about what he should do with Jesus as if he had not already been asked to crucify him. While Pilate in the most emphatic manner possible repudiated responsibility for the death of "innocent" Jesus, the Jewish people in frivolous and high spirits took this responsibility upon themselves and their generations with equal emphasis. It is curious that the high priests who were concerned about a

riot on Jesus' arrest (MT 26:5) were now publicly inciting the crowd to demand his crucifixion. The same priests who were concerned of Roman punitive action in case of an insurrection were now demanding the release of a man actually involved in another insurrection. Furthermore, even if Jesus was a pretender to David's throne why should "the crowd" be wanting to have him crucified? Were there no dissenting voices?

It is ominous that Pilate "Delivered Jesus to their will" (LK 23:25), "then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. They crucified him" (JN 19: 16, 18). This is reaffirmed later: The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging on a tree (Acts 5:30). The blame is taken away from Pilate and all on to the Jews for crucifying Jesus. Again this makes the whole affair doubtful because if Jesus was delivered to the Jews then they ought to have stoned him and not crucified as alleged. If it was indeed they who crucified Jesus then why did Joseph of Arimathea have to ask Pilate for the body? (JN 19:38).

The whole affair seems fake and irrational. It takes little reflection on the manifest improbabilities of the Gospel accounts to realise that the actual events must have been very different. The accounts of trials before Sanhedrin as well as by Pilate are obviously artificially constructed to project the defeat of the crucified Jesus as his victory over the Jews and being innocent of any wrong-doing against the (Pagan, Gentile) Romans whose confidence was now being sought by the Gospel writers.

PONTIUS PILATE

It is strange that while Pilate "knew that the Chief priests had delivered him for envy" (MK 15:10; MT 27:18), "found no fault in this man" (LK 23:14; JN 19:6), "nor yet Herod" (LK 23:15), and washed his hands (a Jewish and not a Roman custom) declaring "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (MT 27:24), yet "he could prevail nothing" and was forced to release a dangerous rebel and hand over "innocent Jesus" to the Jews to be crucified. This projects Pilate as indecisive, lacking firmness and being intimidated by the chief priests and "the multitude". We find that this is not the true picture.

As is historically known, Judaea, and in fact all of Palestine, was a very sensitive part of the Roman empire with Parthians knocking at its borders and Zealots stirring trouble among the Jews. Pilate must have been a trusted and tough-minded person to have been appointed as procurator of this sensitive region. He also had powerful friends in Rome. His wife Claudia Procla was a grand-daughter of Emperor Augustine. Indeed the Jewish king Agrippa I had complained to Emperor Caligula about Pilate being of unbending and ruthlessly hard character.

The Roman governor was normally resident in Caesarea about sixty miles from Jerusalem. He would come down to Jerusalem only occasionally and especially at festivals when any disturbances would be anticipated. A Roman garrison was stationed in the citadel, Antonia, overlooking the Temple. It was customary for Roman cohorts to carry their standards bearing effigies of the Emperor or of various deities and other heathen symbols. These were considered sacred by them as symbols of pride and honour. Since the Jews were sensitive to the presence of these "graven images" in their holy city, and more so overlooking their Temple, it was a practice of earlier governors that the troops left these standards behind at Caesarea or would dismantle these before entering Jerusalem. This was an expedient conciliatory concession but Jews took it as indicating acceptance by the Roman government of the Jewish evaluation of Jerusalem as a holy city. Pilate was appointed procurator or praefactor of Judaea in 26 C.E. by the emperor Tiberius. As one of his first acts he wanted to change the practice of dismantling the standards and instead ordered the troops to enter the city after dark carrying their

standards. The Jews were shocked to see the objectionable standards displayed from the walls of Antonia next morning but instead of a violent reaction they resorted to passive resistance and went to Caesarea as a large but orderly group to petition the governor. Pilate not wanting to have a showdown soon after taking office withdrew his previous orders. However, it is unlikely that Pilate ordered the initial step without receiving prior instructions or approval from Rome. In fact he relented in withdrawing his orders on the ground that it would insult Caesar. That he may have prior instructions to withdraw his orders in case of imminent trouble is also quite likely. In fact, Philo of Alexandria does record imperial instructions to withdraw the standards on this or some similar occasion.

Not long after the first instance Pilate proceeded to build an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem. This innocuous, rather useful and laudable, civil work infuriated the Jews as an interference in the affairs of their holy city. The real cause of objection may well have been Pilate's defraying of the cost of the project out of the sacred treasury (Korbonar) of the Temple. The Jews reacted violently. Pilate ordered his troops to disguise themselves in local Jewish dress and mingle with the mob and to use cudgels to quell the uprising. This completely surprised the Jews and several were killed. The uprising was effectively subdued. It may be this incidence which is rather tacitly referred to by Luke (13:1-3): "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them. Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish". [If we try to read Luke' version between the lines then Jesus' reply could mean that "unless you organise yourself you too would end up in such a situation"]. On another occasion when there was an uprising in Samaria in 36 C.E. Pilate again acted resolutely to quell it.

The above incidents indicate that Pilate was an astute and able administrator who could act appropriately under given situations. If he did indeed order the crucifixion of Jesus, as is alleged, then he must have been satisfied of the guilt of "the King of the Jews". It can also be granted that he may even condemn an innocent Jew on the insistence of the Jews on religious charges in which case the execution would have been by stoning. This would be a cold-blooded murder on his part but this is exactly how the episode is presented by the Gospels while trying to exonerate the Roman governor.

There remains the possibility that Pilate having condemned Jesus made arrangements to save innocent Jesus and crucified some 'Jestai' in his place. It is, however, most unlikely that he would agree, even at the risk of a clash with the Jews, to release a rebel who had murdered a Roman official. After all, he was answerable to the Emperor and releasing of a criminal would more likely bring Emperor's displeasure than releasing of an innocent and just man Jesus against whom the Jews could not prove the allegation of calling himself a "King of the Jews". Since crucifixions on festival occasions would not be cherished by the Jews anyway, Pilate using his diplomacy could have persuaded the Chief Priests to postpone the trial until after their own holy festival. Indeed he could have ordered that the trial would be held in Caesarea which was his official seat. In a similar situation Paul, too, was taken to Caesarea to save him from the murderous attempts by the Jews.

It was the Roman procedure that the governors of outlying provinces sent periodical reports to the imperial courts on important events. If Jesus was indeed crucified as is alleged, it is unlikely that Pilate would have admitted having crucified an innocent man and released a dangerous criminal. In any case such a report if it did exist, would not have been favourable to

Jesus and, therefore, unacceptable to the Church who may have seen to its destruction when it gained state patronage. The truth, whatever it was, stands lost forever.

CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

Much of what happened between the arrest and crucifixion could scarcely have been experienced by the disciples of Jesus as eyewitnesses because by that time they all had fled. Peter did follow him to high priest's house but we hear of him no more until after "resurrection". Later we find disciples "saying, the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (LK 24:34), we are, however, not told where this actually happened. The "women" are said to be really the only witnesses of the various phases of crucifixion, burial and resurrection yet not of ascension for after reporting about the empty tomb they too disappear from the scene never to be mentioned ever again in any of the books of the New Testament. Paul does not even acknowledge them in his list of witnesses (1 Cor 15:5-8).

The earliest Gospel of Mark talks only of "a sepulchre" (MK 15:46), Matthew tells of a "new tomb hewn out in the rock" (MT 27:60), in Luke it is "a sepulchre that was hewn in stone wherein never man before was laid" (LK 23:53), John places such a sepulchre in a garden near the place where he was crucified" (JN 19:41). This is quite in the manner the myths are built. But it is most unlikely that the rich man of Arimathea would have his tomb in a garden near the cursed ground of Golgotha unless of course the site was deliberately selected with the specific aim of resuscitating Jesus in an undefiled spot away from public eye.

The early witnesses to the disappearance of Jesus' body and the empty tomb on Sunday morning were "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome" (MK 16:1), "Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary" (MT 28:1), "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them" (LK 24:10). But John records only Mary Magdalene. We are not sure if "Mary the mother of James" is the Virgin Mary or the mother of James and John Zebedee or someone else. In any case her absence is most astonishing.

According to Mark neither said anything to any man; for they were afraid (MK 16:8). [MK 16:9-20] is admittedly a later interpolation. Matthew records that they did run to bring disciples his word, "to go tell my brethren they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me" (MT 28:8-10). Luke tells us that these women told all these things into the eleven" but "these words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (LK 24:9-11). John's story is little more elaborate. Mary Magdalene goes and tells Peter and John the beloved (JN 20:2) who come to the tomb. According to Matthew (28:16) there is no report of the disciples visiting the tomb itself but they go to Galilee and meet Jesus there (MT 28:17). In Luke's version the disciples do not believe the women but even so Peter runs to check (LK 24:12), John (the beloved) tells us that he himself accompanied Peter (JN 20:3).

Except for the women, no disciple sees Jesus anywhere near the tomb. Even after seeing Jesus in Galilee "some doubted" (MT 28:17) Luke's Gospel mentions several sightings of the "risen Jesus" including one in Emmaus where he "vanishes out of their sight" (LK 24:31) and appears to "the eleven and others", eats with them (LK 24:43), and tells them to "tarry ye in Jerusalem". John tells us that Jesus saw his disciples three times, twice behind closed doors in Jerusalem and the third time at the sea of Tiberias (JN 20:19, 26, 21:1).

That portion of the Gospel of Mark which mentions Jesus' receiving up in heaven (MK 16:7-20) is admittedly a later interpolation by an unknown scribe who wanted this Gospel to come at par with other Gospels about Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Matthew does not mention ascension while Luke (24:51) says "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven" after "he led them out as far as to Bethany". [GNB Footnote: Some manuscripts do not

have "and was taken up into heaven"). However, in his later book the Acts of the Apostles, he tells us that ascension took place "from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey"(Acts 1:12). John is more concerned with the "return of the lord" so he makes Jesus utter "till I come"(JN 21:21, 23) but nothing about ascension.

Interestingly, Paul is concerned more about Jesus' resurrection and return. He does not mention the empty tomb because he is basically concerned with the "risen Christ" and not with Jesus' earthly life. According to Paul the following were the eye-witnesses of Jesus' resurrection:

1 Cor(15)

5. He was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve [As if Judas Iscariot was still one of the twelve and Cephas was not!].
6. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. [Paul is the only one who mentions this fantastic event. He, however, does not elaborate on it. All Gospel writers ignore this exaggerated account.]
7. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. [Witness by James is not corroborated by any other evidence. We are also not sure if "all the apostles" have a repeat vision since "the twelve" had already had the experience].
8. And last of all he was seen of me also.

Paul's assertion of "seen of me" is important in order to understand the significance of these visions. The book of Acts mentions his experience thus: "he fell to the earth, and heard a voice the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man"(Acts 9:4-7). However, the same book quotes him as saying; "I fell to the ground and heard a voice, they that were with me saw indeed the light, but heard not the voice of him that spake" .. I could not see for the glory of that light "(Acts 22:7,9,11). Paul mentions another vision that he had; "while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying to me"(Acts 22:17-18). "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in body, I cannot tell; God knoweth)"(II Cor 12:2). "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the lord in a vision(Acts 9:10).

If such are the examples of "witnesses" according to Paul then it seems that according to him all those "Twelve", and "Five Hundred," and Cephas and James must have had similar experiences. The passion story and Jesus' meeting with his disciples and others after resurrection is patently doubtful and so was it even to his disciples who are said to have met him in Galilee. The accounts of "resurrection" are manifestly mere legends with not even the synoptic Gospels agreeing on the main points, not to speak of minor details.

Luke tells us that in accordance with the command of the risen Jesus the disciples stayed back in Jerusalem "and were continually in the temple"(LK 24:53). This too is surprising. Because if after Jesus' arrests the disciples were really afraid and "they forsook him, and fled"(MT 26:56) then the obvious course for them was to return to Galilee with haste. Even if they became aware of the empty tomb it was all the more dangerous to stay in Jerusalem as the Jews and the Romans will now mount a search for them for being the most obvious suspects for snatching the dead body. Their various hideouts would now be known to the authorities through Judas Iscariot.

THE APOSTLES AT GETHSEMANE

Since we have postulated that Jesus may have been arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane for causing disturbance at the Temple as part of a greater plot to overthrow the

Roman overlordship, the question naturally arises as to why were Jesus' companions not arrested along with him. Answer to this question, like many others, is lost in the confusion of the Gospel stories specially tailored to the purpose of depicting Jesus as an innocent victim of Jewish conspiracy in order to present him and Christianity as pacifist, non-violent, having nothing to do with the ultimate Jewish Revolt. Many details have been swept aside and brushed under the carpet so that we cannot lay our hands on the necessary details.

Even behind the smoke-screen we can discern that, if anything, Jesus was not stoned to death, a religious punishment, but rather crucified, a civil punishment, along with two "bandits" (desai/zealots). John tells us that a cohort [almost six hundred] of soldiers came to seize Jesus (JN 18:3). He makes Jesus ask the arresting party: "Whom seek ye?" (18:4,7). When the soldiers said and reaffirmed, that they had come to arrest "Jesus of Nazareth", who had already been identified by Judas Iscariot, he tells them: "I am he, if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (18:8). It is obvious that there was a definite possibility of his companions being arrested. It is surprising that even when Peter smote Malchus ear (MK 14:47, Lk 22:50, JN 18:10) none of the soldiers is said to have made any attempts to intervene and at least take hold of him as a consequence to this provocation. Yet it is Peter who followed Jesus "from afar" (MK 14:54, MT 26:58, LK 22:54, JN 18:15). Even when Peter is recognized, or at least suspected of being Jesus' companion while at High Priest's house, no one is concerned about him. Meanwhile "all forsook him, and fled" (MK 14:50). They did not try to follow their Master even from "afar". Obviously, they did have the apprehension that they too might be arrested. Mark tells us that the soldiers did try to apprehend some of them and in the process tried to seize a young man (14:51) but he got away naked leaving his only covering.

Where did these companions go? These Galileans, looking no different from more than a million other pilgrims, must have easily melted away in the crowd and headed in haste to the pre-arranged rendezvous in Galilee (MT 27:16, JN 21:1; also MK 16:7). Luke, however, asserts that they stayed back in Jerusalem (24:33). John who keeps them in Jerusalem before going to Galilee does indicate that "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews" (JN 20:19). There would have been no need for that if the soldiers had come to arrest only "Jesus of Nazareth".

Luke again reasserts that "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14). This would be very unusual as these people had come to Jerusalem only as pilgrims and after the festival, and especially after losing their leader, it was only natural that they should return to Galilee. In fact before the dust settled the authorities may have again started looking for some of these disciples. Whatever the New Testament writers may like to convey or conceal, we do not hear about various disciples any more: not even Nicodemus, nor Joseph of Arimathea. James Zebedee was arrested in Galilee by Herod and killed with the sword" (Acts 12:1) – a civil punishment and "he proceeded further to take Peter also" (Acts 12:3). He too may have been apprehended in Galilee and not Jerusalem which was under Roman rule. It is, therefore, a mistaken notion that the authorities were not looking for them.

It is also possible that the Romans (and Temple authorities) may have taken a pre-emptive action in arresting Jesus after Barabbas' premature attack on the Roman citadel Antoine. Considering the movement to have evaporated they did not pursue the Galileans too far. Anyone who was recognized was arrested as stated above. In any case how do we know that some were not arrested? As we stated in the beginning of this chapter, the truth in the Gospels (and in the Acts and elsewhere in NT) is like an iceberg ... a little is showing, much more lies between the lines.

It is also significant that the head of the mother Church in Jerusalem was none of the "Eleven" Apostles but Jesus' (supposed) brother James who was known to have not been associated with Jesus' mission during his lifetime.

JESUS' AGE

We have already noted in Chapter IV that confusion abounds about the actual date of Jesus' birth. To some extent this is understandable since it will be not of general interest to take notice of the birth of a son to a non-descript carpenter in the backwoods of Galilee. But once Jesus became a noticeable entity his looks, his stature, his other physical characteristics and also his approximate age would, or should, have been a common knowledge at least among his followers, closer disciples and especially the twelve apostles. Yet Mark, the earliest writer, who is said to be the mouthpiece of Peter, does not mention the strange and extraordinary circumstances of Jesus' birth, his activities before the start of the mission, the duration of his mission, and Jesus' age at his alleged crucifixion. Matthew and John are also silent. In fact we can only assume that, according to the three synoptic Gospels, Jesus' mission lasted just about one year. John indicates that the mission may have lasted three years.

Luke(3:23) gives a clue to Jesus' age at the start of his missionary work: "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years...". this leaves a margin for approximation of two to three years, if not more, on both sides of the thirty years mark. There are no estimates even for the age of John the Baptist himself who was about six months older to Jesus.

John the Baptist appears to have been executed by Herod Antipas some time after 28 C.E. but not later than 35 C.E. Jesus' own crucifixion is variously dated between 30 C.E. and 36 C.E. and seems to have occurred after John's death. It cannot have been later than 36 C.E. because Pilate in that year was recalled to Rome. Stephen, usually hailed as Christianity's first martyr was stoned to death in Jerusalem, after Pilate's recall, in 36 C.E. If Jesus was indeed born in the year of the Census then he could be about forty years of age at the time of his "crucifixion".

According to John's Gospel Jesus told the Jews; "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad"(8:56). The reaction of the Jews gives another possible clue to Jesus' age: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham"(8:57).

Now, if Jesus was really between 40 to 36 years old, then would Jews tell him "Thou art not yet fifty years old"? Or, would they rather have told him: "Thou art not yet forty years old"? This further confounds the whole issue of the years of birth and crucifixion of Jesus and gives an entirely new perspective to the whole story of Jesus' life and mission. According to Josephus the execution of John the Baptist may have taken place as late as 37 C.E. If Jesus was born between 6 and 4 B.C.E. and started his mission about the time of the Baptist's execution and carried it out for 3 years(or more) then by the time of his crucifixion he could be between 46 and 44 years of age. This would explain why the Jews referred to him as "not yet fifty".

If Jesus was in his forties(and not early thirties) at the time of crucifixion then his birth took place about ten years, if not more, before the generally speculative date and this would put further aspersions on the circumstances of his birth. If he was crucified ten years later than the commonly projected date then this period would be far outside the period of Pilate's governorship, nearer to the period of the Jewish revolt, later than Paul's alleged persecution of the apostles, etc., and would be considered to be contrary to "the facts". Yet no one can ascertain what "the facts" really are, including what was Jesus' activity during all these years beyond his age of "about thirty". A question could then be raised: "Was Jesus (of Christianity) in fact an entity"? Or, was he a figment of Paul's mind? Under the prevailing

confusion and contradictions within the Gospels the true story of Jesus the prophet has been clouded.

MORE THAN A CARPENTER

Was Jesus really a poor carpenter(MK 6:3), son of a poor carpenter(MT 13:55) from a non-descript hamlet not worth a dot on Roman maps, or a mere entry on Josephas' list, or a description in traditional literature or a mention by Paul?

The word Carpenter is actually "NAGGAR" in Aramaic and means not necessarily a Carpenter but actually an accomplished person (even a master craftsman). It is not a very good carpenter who would give the example of noticing a mote in thy brother's eye and ignoring a beam in thine own eyes (MT 7:3). Jesus's knowledge of other earthly matters also seems to be deficient. His description of sowing by careless farmer mentions the seed falling on "the Wayside", on "stone ground", among "thrown" and then also on "good ground"(MK 4:3-9). Obviously he was talking of sowing on an "unploughed field" which no farmer worth his salt would do. Apparently the bookish (learned) Jesus had acquired his knowledge nor from experience but from Mishna where among the forbidden chores or a Sabbath were "sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves". He was overlooking the fact that randomly scattered seed even on a good unploughed ground will not grow profitably or would rather be eaten by the birds. Trying to find fruit from a fig tree when "the time of figs was not yet"(MK 11:13) also shows his naivette about non-bookish things. His description of a mustard plant — "it groweth up, and be cometh greater than all herbs, and shoeteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it"(MK 4:32) — is not an apt one because it never gets tall to hold a bird or cast a big shadow. While he was on a boat he slept on pillow while others were fishing(MK 11:38) — he was not doer of handwork! Rather calls himself "a glutton and a wine-bibber. He wore a one-piece tunic which must have been a costly one to cause casting of lots at his crucifixion! He was often seen in the company of scribes(MK 2:1-12).

We are informed by Luke that when Jesus was twelve years old(2:42, 46) he was learned enough to be "sitting in the midst of doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions" in the Temple itself. When he began preaching in the synagogues it was "with authority"(MT 7:29). He must, therefore, have been well-grounded in religious knowledge — hardly expected from a poor wood-working artisan from a non-descript hamlet. It is most likely that he was a learned Rabbi(as people did call him). He may even have been a "Teacher" in an important Rabbinical school and this is where he may have noticed Nathanael "under the fig tree"(seeking knowledge). At several places in the Gospels we are told that Jesus "taught" even though, except for the Sermon on the Mount/Valley and a few other places, we do not know what he taught. No wonder Nathanael recognises him and calls him "Rabbi"(JN 1:49). Other people also keep calling him Rabbi/Teacher all through the Gospels. They would not be doing so if he was not a learned person. While priesthood had to be hereditary/Levitical, scholarship was not. Famous scholar Gamaliel was not a Levite. Hillel, the famous Rabbi, too was of Davidic descent. Being from Davidic ancestry did not mean that Jesus could not be a "Rabbi".

Jesus must also have been from an aristocratic family. Joseph was from the kingly line of King David. From his mother's side he was related to the important Levite family to which Zechariah and Elizabeth belonged. If he was related to wealthy Mary of Magdala/Bethany in any way(Married? — as indicated in Gospel of Philips as well as Gospel of Thomas) then he may also have been connected with the Benjamite tribe of King Saul. All this makes a Grand Alliance making Jesus a perfect contender to be the King of Israel as Nathanael calls him(JN

1:49). In fact the people were inclined to openly declare him "king"(JN 6:14-15). Jesus himself refused to tell people not to call him "king"(LK 19:40) but rather told his disciples:"As for those enemies of mine who did not want me to be their king bring them here and slaughter them in my presence"(LK 19:27). No wonder Pilate wanted to confirm if he was indeed the "King of the Jews"(MK 15:2). That may be the reason Pilate sent Jesus to King Herod who had been wanting to kill him(LK 13:31) possibly for that very cause. However, having satisfied himself that Jesus was not seeking "the kingdom of this world"(JN 18:36) Herod returned him to Pilate without admitting that there was any cause for concern from Zealots in Galilee and that if any insurrection had taken place in Jerusalem then Pilate himself should take care of it.

JESUS' FAMILY

The Gospels, the only source about Jesus' life, choose to disclose least information about Jesus' person and his family. Only Matthew and Luke talk about his genealogies. The other two prefer to remain silent about this important aspect of the heir to the throne of king David. That God the Son had even an earthly family during his short sojourn on this Earth is an obvious embarrassment.

While he is obviously the son born to Mary, he is supposed to have had no father. Joseph to whom Mary was betrothed is never admitted as being his father, although he takes the Holy Family to Egypt and then settles at Nazareth(MT 2:19-23). He and Mary "went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover"(LK 2:14). Whether or not they took Jesus along on these trips is not clear. However they did take him along when he was twelve year old(LK 2:43). That is all we know about Joseph. People seem to think that Joseph was indeed Jesus' father for they asked: "Is this not Joseph's son?"(LK 4 :22). It seems that the divine impregnation of Mary was a well-kept secret between Joseph and Mary otherwise people would have asked and commented upon Jesus' paternity, Joseph's adoption of Jesus as his son not withstanding.

Matthew and Mark give the names of Jesus' brothers: James, Josés, Simon, and Judas(MK 6:3; MT 13:55). Mark also tells us that he had sisters living in Nazareth. If Jesus had brothers as well as sisters then it means that they too were born to Mary and were younger than him. However, the Church would have us to believe that Mary was a "perpetual virgin". Is it then that Joseph "being a just man and not willing to make her a public example"(MT 1:19) decided to have nothing to do with Mary and took yet another wife who then bore these "brothers and sisters"? We hear of no such woman.

Jesus' family must have been worried, his divine Son-ship besides, about people saying that "he hath an unclean spirit"(MK 3:30) so they go to seek him(MK 3:35-32; MT 12:46-47; LK 8:19-20). His brothers(mockingly?) suggested to him : "Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also see the works that thou doest . . . for neither did his brethren believe in him"(JN 7:3,5). None of them is supposed to have been present at the site of Crucifixion so that Jesus had to leave his mother in the custody of "the beloved disciple". Suddenly we learn that James the Just(Gal 2:9; Acts 12:17, 15:13) headed the young Church at Jerusalem. How and when was James won over is not clear.

As for Jesus having a wife(and children!) we are once again in the dark. However, according to the prevalent Jewish custom it is most unlikely that an eligible 30 years old man would have remained unmarried. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favour of the Lord"(Prov 18:22). If Jesus was a Rabbi then there is all the likelihood that he was indeed married in the rabbinical tradition and may even have had several children. All

this must be very embarrassing to the Church and its powerful vested interests who have made sure that the information is effectively clouded.

THE MYSTERIOUS LAZARUS

According to the Gospel of John, when Lazarus falls sick and apparently dies, his sisters Mary and Martha sent for Jesus "saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick"(JN 11:3). Lazarus is then raised to life. Later, six days before passover festival the "Last supper" is held at his house in Bethany with Lazarus sitting at the table with Jesus and the "Twelve" disciples. It is from here that Jesus marches to Jerusalem, is arrested and then allegedly crucified.

At the time of Jesus' arrest "all forsook him and fled"(MK 14:50; MT 26:56). According to the Synoptic Gospels Peter was the only one who followed him "afar off"(MK 14:54; MT 26:58; LK 22:54). Another young man tried to follow him "having a linen cloth cast on his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked"(MK 14:51-52). John, however, tells us that "Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple, that disciple was known to the high priest"(JN 18:15). According to the Synoptic Gospels except for certain women none of the disciples were around at the site of Crucifixion. However, John asserts that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was present along with Jesus' mother and Jesus entrusted her to his care.

Where was Lazarus during all these fateful happenings? He seems to be conspicuously absent. This would be a shameless display of ingratitude and disloyalty for a man who, quite literally, owed his life to Jesus. However, with a little thought the mystery starts to unravel. Consider the following "coincidences":

- i) When Lazarus falls sick his sisters send for Jesus "saying Lord behold, he whom thou lovest is sick"(JN 11:3).
- ii) Lazarus is present at the table at the "Last Supper". Besides the "Twelve" no one else is mentioned(JN 12:2). Being the host he must be sitting next to Jesus the guest.
- iii) "The disciple whom Jesus loved" is leaning on Jesus' bosom(JN 13:23). He has to be sitting next to Jesus to be able to do that.
- iv) Even Peter does not take the liberty of asking Jesus about the one who will betray Jesus. He asks this "disciple whom Jesus loved" to ask the question. This could not be John Zebedee.

Somehow the Gospels are trying not to name Lazarus directly. Could this "disciple whom Jesus loved" be really Lazarus? If so, many previous ambiguities are removed:

- i) He may well have been the un-named disciple who followed Jesus after John the Baptist proclaims him as the Lamb of God, the other being Andrew(JN 1:40). This would make him one of the earliest disciples having precedent over Peter.
- ii) He may be the one who secretly arranged for the colt/ass for Jesus on way to Jerusalem.
- iii) The "Last Supper" is held at his house in Bethany(JN 12) or at a house arranged by him in Jerusalem according to Synoptic Gospels.
- iv) He was the young man in linen cloth at the place of Jesus' arrest(MK 14:51-52).
- v) Being a rich man living near Jerusalem [According to JN(11:18) Bethany was only "fifteen furlongs"(KJV)/three kilometres/two miles(NAS) from Jerusalem]. He may have been personally known to the High Priest and therefore was able to take Peter along to witness the trial(JN 18:16).

- vi) If Jesus was indeed married to Mary, then Lazarus was his brother-in-law.
- vii) He is present at the site of Crucifixion and Jesus entrusts him (his own brother-in-law) the custody of his mother.
- viii) He is present at Galilee: "the disciple whom Jesus loved" saith unto Peter, it is the Lord"(JN 21:7).
- ix) Lazarus is the one who must stay behind and wait for Jesus' return(JN 21:22). That may be another reason why Jesus left his mother to his care.
- x) Jesus "ascends" from the mount Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey"(Acts 1:12) and is just outside Bethany(LK 19:29).
- xi) John tells us that Lazarus' sister Mary poured the oil on Jesus' feet at Lazarus' house(JN 12:3). According to Mark and Matthew it happens at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper and a "certain woman" pours oil on Jesus' head(MK 14:3; MT 26:6-7).

Why is it that this one of the earliest and closest of Jesus' disciples is not shown as of the inner circle? Why is there no account of Lazarus/"the beloved disciple" after Jesus' ascension in any of the New Testament books? The answer lies in the possibility that Lazarus belonged to Jesus' inner circle of diehard collaborators/conspirators who must carry on the struggle to restore the glory of King David while Peter and other disciples chose to carry on the "mission of the message". No wonder he is the only disciple whom the Jews wanted to kill(JN 12:10) during Jesus' lifetime.

Lazarus was the symbol of resistance to Rome. The Pauline Church had worked hard to show Jesus as a victim of Jewish conspiracy thus shifting the blame of his Crucifixion from Rome to the Jews. They could not align the true character of Lazarus with Jesus the Pacifist. The latter part of the story was obviously an embarrassment and his name could not be presented in its true perspective. The earliest Gospels do not even mention him by name. [It is generally considered that Mark's Gospel originally contained Lazarus' story but the early Church excised it]. The fourth Gospel mentions his name only to emphasise Jesus as a life-giver.

Jesus had instructed his followers to "flee to the mountains"(MK 13:14; MT 24:16; LK 21:23) when it is time for the "abomination of desolation". The leader of Jewish resistance at the hill top fortress of Masada, which fell in 74 C.E., was named Eleazar. Could "the disciple that Jesus loved", traditionally considered to be John the Evangelist himself, be really Eleazar also known as Lazarus? Well, if Lazarus was indeed Eleazar then he is not likely to be the writer of the Gospel. The Evangelist may then have been someone else who used Lazarus' memoirs. Beyond that, it could well have been Lazarus. In fact one of the foremost experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a leading scholar, Prof. William Brownlee, concludes that "the beloved disciple is Lazarus of Bethany"(Whence The Gospel According to John, pp. 192). The Church, however, would not like to admit this.

THE ELUSIVE MARY

All the four Gospels record the incident of Jesus being anointed by a woman:

- i) A woman in the house of Simon the leper in Bethany(MK 14:3; MT 26:7). She pours the ointment of spiknard, very precious, on his head.
- ii) A woman, a sinner, at the house of Pharlsee, called Simon(LK 7:37). She anoints Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair.
- iii) Mary, sister of Lazarus, at Bethany pours a very expensive oil of nard at Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair(JN 12:3).

It is very likely that the Synoptic Gospels are confused because of their second-hand information or are else deliberately trying to black out the name of Lazarus, brother of Mary. The woman who anointed the head/feet of Jesus with a costly perfume in all these episodes may well have been Mary of Bethany. She comes from a rich family and can therefore afford the costly perfume. Could Simon be actually Lazarus. This will then reconcile the three different episodes!

It is interesting that when Jesus is called to cure Lazarus "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house"(JN 11:20). Then "she went her way and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him"(JN 11:28-29). Is it that Mary was "sitting shivah" or sitting in mourning and therefore, did not come out in the first instance? According to Judaic Law such a woman would be strictly forbidden to emerge from the house except as expressly required by her husband. This also explains why Marhta goes and whispers(i.e. saying it privately) to Mary that Jesus wanted to see her.

Luke brings in an odd unrelated story out of the blue which confirms the hearsay character of his source: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Marry, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her"(LK 10:38-42). This episode, however detached it seems to be from the episode of anointing, may well have been part of it. This, however, indicates some special attachment that Mary sister of Martha and Lazarus may have had with Jesus.

It is significant that in the Aramaic language "Martha" actually means "the lady of the house". Could it be that Martha was indeed "lady of the house" at Bethany? No wonder she was serving at the table and even though she was "cumbered about much serving"(LK 10:48) Mary kept sitting at Jesus' feet. Then Martha complained to Jesus(Mary's husband?) about Mary(his wife?) leaving her to serve alone. Mary could thus be only visiting Bethany along with others in Jesus' entourage on way to Jerusalem. Having forebodings of the dangers ahead Mary may be caressing Jesus' feet knowing well the meaning of what Jesus uttered: "me ye have not always"(JN 12:8). According to Mark(14:9) and Matthew(26:3) Jesus said of her: "Verily I say to you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her".

Was Mary a "sinner" as stated by Luke(7:38)? Perhaps no more than when Peter told Jesus "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"(LK 5:8). The presence of a "sinner" at the house of a Pharisee would be unthinkable but Luke the Gentile did not realise this. Or perhaps the Church deliberately chose to avoid naming someone who was related to Lazarus and Jesus!

Even though Mary (of Bethany) is rich and close to Jesus as a disciple herself, it is strange that she is not stated to be one of those women who followed Jesus through his journeys or were present at the site of Crucifixion. Those who followed him were "certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance"(LK 8:2-3) right from the days of Jesus' Galilean mission. At Golgotha/Calvary "the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off(LK 23:49) and also "beheld the sepulchre and prepared spices and ointments"(LK 23:55-56).

According to Mark there were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Jesus, and Salome (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem" (15:40-41). Matthew lists "many women . . . from Galilee . . . Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses and the mother of Zebedee's children" (27:55-56). On the first day of the week when these women return to the sepulchre, all four Gospels include Mary Magdalene. Strangely, according to John, only Mary Magdalene turned up at the sepulchre (20:1) but other Gospels mention some others. {Whether Jesus was alive or dead it would have been most unusual and objectionable for her to handle Jesus' body, even for anointing, unless she was a kin to him}. But no Mary of Bethany! Where was she? Why did she not accompany Jesus? Or, did she?

Who was this Mary Magdalene who followed Jesus on all his journeys? She could be from the village of Magdala in Galilee and must have been a woman with substantial means and a friend of Joanna the wife of Chozai, the steward to Herod. She is the one "out of whom went seven devils" (LK 8:2) whatever that means. The Church would have us believe that she was a "prostitute" and has tried to blacken her name calling the houses for reformed prostitutes as "Magdalene"! So she too is supposed to be a "sinner" like Mary of Bethany. Actually "seven devils" could also mean that before following Jesus she was a member of the cult of Ishtar/Istare which involved a seven stage initiation.

These "coincidences" indicate the possibility that Mary the visitor to Bethany and Mary the visitor from Magdala may well be the same person. If so, then Mary of Bethany must have accompanied her brother Lazarus ("the disciple whom Jesus loved") to Golgotha in the person of Mary Magdalene. Nothing else would make any sense. The Church deliberately disguised her name as it did in the case of her brother Lazarus. No wonder Paul also totally ignores the name of this very first witness to resurrection from his own list of such witnesses (1Cor 15:5-8).

Now the question arises as to an unmarried woman Mary of Magdala/Bethany accompanying Jesus and his party. According to the Judaic custom this was not thinkable. Some Pharisee would have immediately pointed this out. To support this we can produce the incidence of (St.) Thecla who wanted to accompany Paul on his journeys but was not allowed on account of her being an unmarried woman. She then changed her garb and travelled with him clothed as a male (Acts of Paul and Thecla).

Could Mary of Bethany/Magdala have been married to someone in Jesus' party"? Could he be Jesus himself? This is indeed a probability considering various factors stated above. Of course, it cannot be confirmed (or denied) categorically. Nor it is important for our purposes except to indicate the confusion created by the Gospels. If Jesus was indeed married to Mary of Magdala/Bethany or someone else then the Church would be interested to obliterate any evidence, indication, or even a hint of a suggestion that "God the Son" had a human wife.

JESUS' TOWN

Although there is variance between the Gospels regarding the city where Joseph and Mary lived before Jesus' birth, there seems to be agreement between Matthew and Luke that he was brought up in Nazareth of Galilee (MT 2:23, LK 4:16). It is in Nazareth that he announced that he was the promised Messiah (the Anointed One). Apparently the people in the synagogue were filled with wrath that this carpenter son of a carpenter had the audacity to proclaim to them, FALSELY, that he was the Anointed One. So they "rose up, and thrust him out of the city and led him into the brow of the hill whereon this city was built, that they

might cast him down head-long. But he passing through the midst of them went his way and came down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee (LK 4:28-31). "Leaving Nazareth he dwelt in Capernaum (MT 4:13, also MK 1:21). Matthew confirms his continued living there when he brings him to "his city" by the sea. Mark even tells us that he had a house in Capernaum (2:1,15). According to John after attending the marriage at Cana "he went to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples" (JN 2:12).

Nazareth was a small hamlet in the backwoods of Galilee. Josephus the Jewish historian prepared a list of all towns and cities of Galilee during his governorship under Roman rule after the Jewish revolt. Nazareth might have been a small hamlet not worth listing or may have been destroyed during the Revolt making it unnecessary to list.

Capernaum on the other hand was an important town on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus established his headquarters there. Then "he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore I am sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee" (LK 5:43-44). It is, however, very strange that the gospels never tell us that he preached in any of the major cities of Galilee..... Sepphoris, Tiberias and Scythopolis.

SEPPHORIS was only a few miles from Nazareth. It was a solidly Jewish city inhabited by rich aristocratic Jews who had strong loyalties to Rome. They were hellenized and lax in religion in many ways so that pious Jews, and most common Jews were pious, avoided them. During the Jewish Revolt these Jews asked for Roman protection and received a Roman garrison.

TIBERIAS was a new city built on the shores of the sea of Galilee by Herod Antipas. Since it was said to be built on grounds that may have been graveyards pious Jews considered it polluted and avoided to visit it. However, aristocracy, many of whom were Hellenized, built their houses there. Its importance is apparent from the renaming of the sea of Galilee as the sea of Tiberias by Herod.

DECAPOLIS or "ten cities" were smaller cities lying between the west bank of Jordan and the eastern coast of the sea of Galilee. These were towns inhabited by many former Roman soldiers and Greeks. There were also Samaritans but generally not many Jews in these towns. SCYTHOPOLIS was a bigger one among these ten cities and had a mixed population with quite a few well-to-do Jews. During the Jewish Revolt these Jews actually fought alongside the local non-Jewish population. However, in the aftermath of the Revolt the non-Jewish population fell on their Jewish neighbors and wiped them off.

Jesus had said: "they that are whole have no need of the physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (MK 2:17, Mt 9:13, LK 5: 31-32). Here were cities full of "sinners" but he never visited them.

In his "seven woes" he cursed the scribes and the Pharisees (MT 23) and preached that "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter in the kingdom of heaven" (MT 5:20) "Whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (MT 23:3).

Obviously he was trying to organize Jewish resistance and could not go to the disaffected Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles and this is exactly what he had advised his disciples whom he had sent out two by two (MT 10: 5-6). He himself also avoided TYRE and SIDON, two very important but basically non-Jewish towns on the Phoenician coast. Rather he went through rural districts and small towns, country of the Cedarenes (MK 5:1), coasts of Decapolis (MK 8:31), coasts of Tyre and Sidon (MK 8:31), by the sea side, upon the mountains,

down in the valleys, in the desert but hardly any mentionable town of Galilee. His parables are mostly agricultural based.

His mission obviously seems to have faltered: "he did not many mighty works there because of their disbelief"(MT 13:57). In the country of Gergesenes "the whole city came out to meet Jesus and ... besought him that he would depart out of their coasts (MT 8:34). Many of his own disciples left him : "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ... many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it ... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him"(JN 7:54, 60, 66). [It is most unlikely that Jesus said such words of a heathen ritual. The Eucharist is a Pauline institution: "I have received it of the Lord"(I Cor 11:23-27). Jesus may have performed "breaking of the bread" as a communal gesture at the Last Supper which the Apostles may have carried out as a special gesture of remembrance but not as an institution]. (See EUCHARIST, Chapter XIV)]. He complained: "A prophet is not honoured in his own country"(MT 13:57).

He cursed his own towns for not rising to his call: "Woe unto thee, CHORAZIN, woe unto thee for if mighty works, which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than you. And thou, CAPERNAUM, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which had been done in thee , had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day"(MT 11:21-23) Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were totally razed in the aftermath of the Jewish Revolt. Whether the prophecy came true or was invented to fit the event, in any case this reflects the feeling of rejection and disappointment that Jesus must have had.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Mothers of John and Jesus, (Elizabeth and Mary) were cousins. Elizabeth was six months pregnant when Mary conceived(LK 1:26). As such John was six months older to Jesus. Since John's parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, lived "in a city in the hills of juda"(LK 1:39) they may not have been playmates but must have known each other especially when Jesus' parent may have passed through there on way to festivals at Jerusalem.

As John grew up he "waxed strong in spirit and was in the deserts till the days of his showing unto Israel"(LK 1:80). "The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness"(LK 3:2). It is thought that he may have joined the "Essenes. "And he came in all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"(LK 3:3). According to Matthew his message was: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"(MT 3:2). People wondered if he was the Christ or not(LK 3:15). When asked, he denied being Elias, Christ or even "that prophet" which Moses had prophesied(JN 1:19-25).

Jesus' baptism by John is too familiar. Jesus embarked on his own mission either concurrently(JN Ch.1) or after John was put in prison(MK 1:14, MT 4:12, LK 3:23) "in Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God"(MK 1:14). His message was the same as of John: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"(MT 4:17). "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel"(MK 1:15). Thus John and Jesus both had the same message for the people of Israel. Is it a mere coincident that both of them died violent deaths at the hand of the authorities? However, the circumstances of death for both of them are not beyond doubt.

During the days of their mission Judea was under direct Roman rule while Galilee was ruled by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. "But Herod the tetrarch being reprieved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife and for all the evils which Herod had done added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison"(LK 3:19-20). "for John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife"(MK 6:18). Ultimately Herod would have John executed in the prison.

[According to Leviticus(20:19) "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister for he uncovereth his near kin"(Also Lev 18:12). Thus one may not marry an aunt. As a corollary to this, one may also not marry a niece i.e. a niece may not marry an uncle. Yet those who did so argued that this was not so required by the law. One of the Dead Sea Scrolls "Covenant of Damascus"(5:7-11) however condemns such practice.

The Gospels lay emphasis only on her being "brother's wife". This is misleading because the same objection would be equally relevant if she had been some other person's wife and divorced. Later when Jesus said "Whatsoever shall marry a divorcee committeth adultery"(MT 5:32) he too may be referring indirectly to Herodias).

It is unlikely that Herod imprisoned and executed John merely because he was criticizing his marriage to Herodias. John belonged to Judea. It is not clear why he was interfering in the affairs of Galilee. Galileans being recently converted to Judaism had the zeal and enthusiasm of new converts. It was also the hotbed of Zealot activities. Even though it was under a Jewish ruler, nevertheless he was paying tribute to Rome.

John had been telling people "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire"(LK 3:9). What did he mean by that? The sentence is innocuous looking but it could mean that it was ripe time that Romans be kicked out, or also that unless Israel repented it will be destroyed, which again meant rising up and, if possible in the process, to kick out the Romans.

"People asked John what shall we do? he answereth ... he that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none"(LK 3:10-11). Even "the soldiers like wise demanded of him saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no one"(LK 3:14). It is this small entry in the Gospel which must have bothered Herod. The preaching may be causing disaffection among his soldiers as well. "Now when John heard in prison the works of Christ he sent two of his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"(MT 11:2-3) Jesus asked the disciples to convey to John about his own activities.

Meanwhile Jesus had sent the "Twelve" "two by two" in a secretive manner, "taking nothing for their journey, save a staff only [to ward off wild animals]. Luke(9:3) says he did not allow them even that: "no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse. but be shod with sandals, and not put on two coats"(MK 6:8-9) so that they may not arouse any suspicion. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel(MT 10-5-6). "In what place soever ye enter into a house abide till ye depart from that place"(MK 6:10). He had earlier told them: "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers, are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into the harvest"(MT 9:37-38). Then again he sent other seventy also two by two(LK 10:1).

NOT SO DIVINE

It is unfortunate that the "Inspired" Gospels demonstrate themselves not only scanty but also confusing and unreliable source of information on Jesus' life and teachings. To appease the Gentiles the writers deliberately distort or conceal information to assert that Jesus was a

pacifist or at best unconcerned with the political situation prevailing in Palestine. Accepting this version would mean that Jesus was not concerned about the plight of the Jewish masses and the tyranny of the Roman occupation. This would also mean that Jesus was teaching at least a reconciliation between God and Caesar, Good and Evil. Jesus of the Gospels is a paradox — confused, misunderstood, sometimes too much of a simpleton.

Bible itself furnishes proof against, rather than for, the genuineness of its contents. Old Testament concerns itself with the Israelites who are God's "chosen" people and thus lacks universal applicability. The confusing narrations of the New Testament make a mockery of common sense. Their anti-Jewish tone could not have been through divine inspiration nor the source of salvation for mankind. It is unfortunate that through the vagaries of time the real truth has been lost and what we are left with is obviously not the whole truth.

SOME APOCRYPHAL VIEWS

There is a host of material which provide us information and views not found in the four Canonical Gospels. Some of this may indeed be more authoritative than the Canonical Gospels but we have no way of knowing what is the truth and what may be a myth.

The Gospel of the Birth of Mary: The blessed and ever glorious Virgin Mary, sprung from the royal race and family of David, was born in the city of Nazareth Her father's name was Joachim, and he mother's Anna they vowed, if God should favour them with any issue, they would devote it to the service of the Lord So Anna conceived, and brought forth a daughter the parents did call her name Mary the parents having offered up their sacrifice left the Virgin, with other virgins in the apartments of the temple, who were to be brought up there when at length she arrived to her fourteenth year the high-priest made a public order. That all the virgins who had public settlements in the temple, and were come of this age should return home and endeavour to be married. To which command, though all the other virgins readily yielded obedience, Mary the Virgin of the Lord alone answered that she could not comply with its. Assigning reasons, that both her parents had devoted her to the service of the Lord, and besides, that she had vowed virginity to the Lord Then, according to [Isaiah's] prophecy (Rod out of Zion ...), he appointed that the men of the house and family of David who were marriageable, and not married, should bring their several rods, to the altar and out of whatsoever person's rod after it was brought, a flower should bud forth, and on top of it the Spirit of the Lord should set in the appearance of a dove, he should be the man to whom the Virgin should be given and be betrothed a man named Joseph a person very for advanced in years when he *did bring his rod*, and a dove coming from Heaven pitched upon the top of it the Virgin was to be betrothed to him For going to the Virgin in a free manner, as one espoused, and talking familiarly with here, he perceived her to with child.

The Protevangelion: Joachim very rich his wife Anna saw a laurel-tree, and sat under it, and prayed unto the Lord bless me and called her name Mary And the high-priest received her, and blessed her Mary continued in the temple as a dove educated there, and received her food from the hand of an angel.

Behold the angel of the Lord came to Zacharias Go forth and call all together all the widowers and let every one of them bring his rod and he by whom the Lord shall shew a sign shall be the husband of Mary And the high-priest said, Joseph, Thou art the person chosen But Joseph refused, saying, I am an old man, and have children, but she is young Joseph took her his house.

And the high-priest said, call together to me seven undefiled virgins of the tribe of David *Cast lots* who shall spin the golden thread, Mary true purple fell to her lot But from that time *Zacharias the high-priest became dumb*.

And when her sixth month was come, Joseph returned from his building houses abroad, which was his trade found the Virgin grown big smiting his face he said Who has thus deceived me? Who has committed evil in my house, and seducing the Virgin from me, hath defiled her? the priest said to her, Mary what hast thou done? Why hast thou debased thy soul, and forgot thy God Then the priest took the water, and made Joseph drink and sent him to a mountainous place.

There went forth a decrec all Jews should be taxed he saddled the ass, and put her upon it and he found a cave, and let her into it Mary hearing that the children were to be killed, took the child and laid him in the ox-manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The first Gospel of Infancy: *Jesus spoke even when he was in the cradle* they circumcised him in the cave And the old Hebrew woman took the foreskin (others say" she took the navel-string), and preserved it in an alabaster-box of old oil of spikenard. And she had a son who was a druggist, to whom she said, Take heed thou sell not this alabaster box of spikenard-ointment, although thou shouldst be offered three hundred pence for it. Now this is that alabaster-box which Mary the sinner procured.

When the Lord Jesus was seven years of age they were at play, *made clay into several shapes*, then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, I will command these figures, I will command these figures which I have made to walk. And immediately they moved, and when the commanded then to return, they returned *figures of birds* *did fly*.

The Gospel of Nicodemus: Names of the two thieves were Titus on the right side, and Dumachus on the left the elders of the Jews said In the first place we know this concerning thee, that thou was born through fornication; secondly, that upon the account of thy birth the infants were slain in Bethlehem; thirdly, that thy father and mother Mary fled into Egypt, because they could not trust their own people. Some of the Jews who stood by speak more favourably, we cannot say that he was born through fornication; but we know that his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and so he was not born through fornication. Then said Pilate your account is not true, seeing there was a betrothment.

Nicodemus stood before the governor Let him go, and do him no harm and others as well.

Then Pilate sentence thee to be whipped hanged upon a cross and also two criminals with thee, whose names are Dimas and Gestas. One of the two thieves whose name was Gestas, said to Jesus, if thou art the Christ, deliver thyself and us. But the thief who was crucified on his right hand, whose name was Dimas.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out Hely, Hely, Lama Zabachani The centurion went to the governor who calling the Jews together said to them, Have you seen the miracle of the sun's eclipse,, who answered The eclipse of the sun happened according to its usual custom.

Then Nicodemus arose scripture teaches us that the blessed prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven and the sons of the prophets besought Elisha, and walked about with

them three days, and they could not find him they sent forth men returning, said, we went all about, but could not find Jesus.

And Joseph [of Arimathaea] testified that he saw him alive We all knew the blessed Simeon, the high-priest, who took Jesus.

The above quotations from some non-canonical Gospels indicate the process of myth-building. These Gospels are no less authoritative than the four included in the New Testament and had been widely read in many churches before the Canon was adopted by the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. under the tutelage and patronship of the Sun-worshipping emperor Constantine. Some of these, however, continued to be read especially in the Eastern Church as well as the Coptic Church.

FORETOLD BY THE SCRIPTURES?

"AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE SHALL RISE
AGAIN"

(MK 9:31, 10:34; MT 20:19, 16:21, 17:23; LK
9:22, 18:33, 24:7; JN 2:19)

BACK FROM THE GRAVE

BUCHAREST: A Romanian woman fainted when she opened her front door in Bucharest to see her husband back from the grave three days after he was buried. The man identified as Neagu had stopped breathing and collapsed in a fit of coughing after he choked on a fishbone. The family doctor who knew Neagu had a heart condition, did not think twice when he proclaimed the 71-year-old man had died of a heart attack. But three days later, gravediggers at the cemetery heard someone knock on wood. They opened Neagu's coffin to find him alive among wilted flowers. Neagu went back home only to find that his wife and children did not want him. His wife, fearing he was a ghost, barred him from spending nights at home. His two sons told him to stay away from his grandsons. The worst came when it took Neagu three weeks to convince the police, town hall officials, bank clerks, doctors and priests to cancel his death from their registers. Reuter

"THE MUSLIM"
ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
MONDAY, JULY 22, 1991

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MYTH

THE JEWISH REVOLT

In dealing with the life and teachings of Jesus we find very little beyond what is given in the Gospels. There is much less of what we know of the immediate period after his earthly sojourn. This is not surprising considering the intensity of the Jewish revolt and the massacre that followed, and the destruction of all non-Pauline documents after the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Holy Roman Empire. It is often said that just as the "Big Bang" obliterated the evidence regarding the origin of the universe, the Jewish revolt of 66 C.E. obliterated the true story of Jesus' life and teachings. There is almost no evidence about Jesus left to posterity that may have originated in Judaea or Galilee, or from someone who knew Jesus first hand!

Jewish resistance to Roman occupation had indeed never died down. This was evident even in the times of Jesus himself and it is said that he meticulously avoided to be associated with the Zealot party. If he was the Messiah then he had to become a king of the Jews as per prevailing perception by the Jews. Nathanael, on his very first meeting with Jesus, called him "you are Son of God, you are king of Israel" (JN 1:49). "Jesus aware that they meant to come and seize him to proclaim him king, withdrew again to the hills by himself" (JN 6:15). When Jesus went to Jerusalem people "thought that the reign of God might dawn any time" (LK 6:11). The Gospels show him entering Jerusalem on a donkey in the manner of the ancient kings. People shouted: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (LK 19:38). When Jesus was crucified the inscription on his cross is said to read: "Jesus of Nazareth The King of the Jews" (JN 19:19). No wonder the high priest cried out: "It is more to your interest that one man should die for the people, than that the whole people should be destroyed" (JN 11:50).

Come 66 C.E. Jesus' warning of the "abomination of desolation" hit the Jews. The Jews revolted and the Romans moved with a heavy hand to crush it. A leading Roman general Vespasian was sent to Judaea to crush the revolt. The bloody suppression lasted four years. After Nero's death Vespasian rushed to Rome leaving his son Titus in charge of the armies. Vespasian became the Caesar and Titus was able to crush the revolt most mercilessly. Josephus estimates that as many as one million one hundred thousand may have died in Jerusalem alone. The Temple, only recently renovated by Herod the Great, was put to torch and utterly destroyed. All the decorations and gold and silver vessels were taken to Rome. Jerusalem lay in total ruin. Jesus' followers now being distinguished as the Nazareans left Jerusalem before the massacre, in obedience to a divine ordination. [Jesus had already told them to retreat to the hills when they see the "abomination of desolation" (MK 13:29-32), or so we are told]. But they were caught in the countryside. The Gentiles joined the Romans and massacred the Jews that lived in their cities. Galilee was the centre of the resistance and therefore suffered most heavily. According to Josephus: Romans never ceased, night or day, to devastate the plains and to pillage the property of the countryside, invariably killing all capable of bearing arms and reducing the inefficient to servitude. Galilee from end to end became a scene of fire and blood; from no misery, no calamity was it exempt....One could see the whole lake (of Galilee) red with blood and covered with corpses, for not a man escaped" (Josephus: Jewish Wars). The Jews in the Gentile lands also did not escape persecution. Christians found themselves being persecuted both by the Jews as well as the Gentiles who could not trust them for their Messianic message [which seemed to have backfired any way].

By the time the revolt ended those who may have seen or heard Jesus or about him, mostly lay dead. Those who were left, were too confused by the events of these eventful years and could hardly be expected to know many details. Struggle for survival was too great to allow for any constructive recording of something long past and of no immediate consequence. As someone rightly points, Christianity in Palestine went into a tunnel. By the time it emerged it had been shaped beyond recognition by the Pauline doctrines.

"Another important reason for lack of authentic material from early(Palestinian) period is the fact that at this early period not many wise [by human standards], not many mighty, not many noble had been called. St. Mark himself, as we shall see, was probably a man of comparatively poor education"(D.E. Nineham: St. Mark, pp. 18). Moreover, the early Judeo-Christians expected an "imminent return" of Jesus, inauguration of the kingdom of God, and the end of the world "in their own lifetime", and had no need for putting down anything in writing for posterity. The tradition of actually writing the Gospel narrative is indeed a later development. "The question of what led St. Mark and others to break with custom of transmitting the tradition orally and commit some of it in writing is one which has not been satisfactorily answered, and perhaps on the basis of our present information never can be ... St. Mark still seems to expect the end of the world within a generation or so"(D.E. Nineham: Op. Cit., pp. 30).

THE SECOND JEWISH REVOLT

After the Jewish revolt of 66 C.E. and the fall of Masada eight years later, the backbone of the Jewish resistance had been broken and the Jewish dream of regaining control of the Promised Land lay wasted but the spark under the ashes did not die. Between 132 and 135 C.E. rose another revolt lead by Simeon bar Kochba who was supposed to have been descended from Judas of Galilee. As he embarked on his rebellion he turned to the Pauline "Christians" considering them his natural allies being of Messianic cult. But he was disappointed to discover that Pauline "Christianity" had by now evolved its own doctrine of non-political, wholly spiritual, Messiah who had nothing to do with the Jewish hope. Simeon turned against them and persecuted them as traitors. Simeon's revolt was ruthlessly suppressed, but not before the Holy Land had once again been ravaged. Once again, Jerusalem was razed. When it was rebuilt, Jews were forbidden to return to it or establish residence within its precincts. The Romans took their ultimate revenge and renamed the Holy Land as Palestine, or the land of the Philistines, mortal enemies of the Jews.(Note: David killed Goliath who was a Philistine).

"About fifty years after the destruction of their City and Government under Titus, there arose another Messiah son of the Star, to whom the famous Rabbi Akibba applying and accommodating to him the prophesy of Balaam of the star to arise out of Jacob: great was his power, and a bloody war did he wage with the Romans and the Emperor Adrian. After three years he and four hundred thousand Jews were miserably slain by the Emperor, and vast number taken Captive and sold for slaves; those that escaped were so angry with their pretended Messiah, that they termed him Barcozab or Cuzibba, the son of a Lye. After this Adrian marcheth with his victorious Army to Alexandria(where the Jews in favour of Bencozab had destroyed the Romans); there he put to death an infinite number of Jews. The slaughter of them every-where was so great that the Jewish relations thereof are scarcely to be believed. He intirely destroyed the City and Temple of Jerusalem, and built in the place a new city called after his own name Aelia, and a Temple dedicated to Jupiter and other Heathen Temples and destroying their synagogues"(Henry Stubbe: OP. Cit.).

THE NEW REALITIES

Joel(3:9-10) had exhorted: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: Let the weak say, I am strong."

History of the Jewish people has been full of war. Rabbis had defined two different kinds of warfare: Milchemet Mitzvah, a necessary war, and Milchemet Reshut, an optional war. Duteronomy includes instructions on the conduct of such wars. It can be agreed that most of these wars were imposed on the Jewish nation by outside forces, but yet the Jews themselves had been guilty of marauding their weak neighbors for no just cause. The use of CHEREM, the total destruction of all living things in a besieged community, had been as if divinely approved, rather ordained.

Suddenly in the aftermath of Roman suppression of the Jewish Revolt the futility of war seemed to have dawned upon those who had now been scattered among other nations, without a nation-state of their own. Their homeland — Judea, Samaria, Idumea — now became a foreign land to most of them. The new change of hearts and a sense of loss and despondency brought about a consciousness and yearning for peace. While these "Chosen People" considered God (Yahweh Elohim) to be "their God", as opposed to the "gods" of the heathen nations around them, nevertheless it was this God who had created the entire heaven and earth in the beginning(Gen 1:1). This One Universal God therefore could not be partial to one group of people against another. In later years Marten Buber, the great philosopher, would write: I have never been able to believe that this is a message of God Nothing can make me believe in a God who punishes Saul because he has not murdered his enemy."

If "thou shalt not kill" was the commandment of the One Universal God then any and all which so act are guilty and subject to judgment and punishment by others. Thus according to MISHNA, the Jewish book of religious interpretations, to kill one person is like destroying the entire world. This new consciousness of pacificity also brought the consciousness that while the prophets had been exhorting Israel to wage wars, these were basically for preserving the independence, rather the very existence, of the nation of Israel. Actually deep in the hearts of these men of God had been a yearning for peace. Hosea(1:7) had indeed believed that the people would be saved by God's compassion rather than by the bow, the sword, and battle. Micah(4:3-4) and Isaiah(2:4) had dreamed of the time when people would "beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning forks, nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war. But every man shall sit under his grapevine with no one to disturb him".

Even the ultimate Messianic dream had been: Peace on earth, goodwill to men (of understanding). Israel needed to pursue peace especially now that it could not wage war. This was the prescription for Jewish survival for 1900 years. [It is yet another matter when they managed to get an upper hand after the establishment of the state of Israel in land usurped from the Arab inhabitants]. Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai having realized that resistance to Rome was futile, pleaded to the Roman Emperor Vespasian, who at that time was directing the assault on Jerusalem, to let him found a school outside Jerusalem for the study of Torah and to establish a "bet din" (court of justice). This school became the leading academy of the (new) Jewish world. It was under the direction of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai that Tanakh (Hebrew Old Testament) was canonized at Jamnia Circa 100 C.E. Having been bitten by the Messianic "prophecies" this new Jewish leadership adopted a more practical approach by discarding the books written later than Malachi. The Alexandrine Jewry, not having undergone the same traumatic experience as those in Palestine continued with the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament including what is now known as the Apocrypha) until much later.

Thus in the wake of the second and final blow, a new form of Judaism had begun to coalesce, oriented toward rabbinical teaching. This rabbinical Judaism, the progenitor of Judaism in its modern form had in its disillusionment repudiated the Messianic movement, ambitious political enterprises, and to ensure its own survival entrenched itself behind the cultivation of learning, scholarship and ritual observance. Pauline Christianity had already adopted this line. Survivors of Simoon's army and such Jews who did not continue in the new rabbinical Judaism now flocked to the Nazarean Party who to them now represented the true repository of Judaism. Since the Nazareans were persecuted by the so-called (Pauline "Christians", Jews, as well as Romans they relegated themselves to the far corners of the Roman empire to Egypt, to Syria and Mesopotamia, even to Spain and Ireland. It is here that the Nazarean thought survived for several centuries. It is interesting to note that in Arabic-speaking Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, etc., Christians are still known as "al Nasara" or the Nazareans even though the original Nazarean thought has long been curbed and replaced by Pauline "Christianity".

PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS

As is indicated by the story of Stephen (Acts 7) Jews started persecuting the followers of Jesus early and it is at this stage that Saul/Paul comes into picture. "At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the region of Judaea and Samaria except the Apostles" (Acts 8:1). The book of Acts gives several incidences of persecution. As a result of various allegations brought against him by the Jews Paul had to save himself by disclosing his Roman citizenship. When Jesus' followers were branded as Christians they became a particular target of persecution and discrimination by the Jews.

Romans who did not particularly distinguish between the Jews and Christians were severe in their treatment of both after the Jewish revolt. In the next three centuries, until Constantine became their patron, the Christians were despised both by the Jews as well as by the Roman and had to remain mostly passive and secretive. There was severe persecution against them during the reigns of Nero (64 C.E), Domitian (81-96 C.E) and Trajan (101 C.E.). St. Ignatius and St. Clements were martyred. The persecution in the reign of Marcus Antonius lasted ten years. The persecution in the reign of Severus which started in 202 C.E. spread to Egypt, Carthage and France and thousands of Christians were killed. Maximin systematically eliminated the clergy as he considered that devoid of religious leadership it will be easier to control the lay Christians. Pope Pontianus and Pope Anteros were killed during this persecution. The persecution by Decius during 253 C.E. was so widespread and severe that a very large number of Christians abandoned their faith. Valerian (257 C.E.) issued edicts that Christians should be killed and plundered. Many were killed, taken slaves, or exiled. The persecution by Aurelian (302 C.E.) was so severe that not a single Christian remained in many regions. In order to root out the evil of Christianity Diocletian (284-305 C.E.) actively endeavoured to completely destroy Christianity. Churches and religious documents were ordered to be burnt and severe punishments were awarded for possessing forbidden books. This period is known as the Age of Martyrdom. It is indeed amazing that even after all these calamities many books still survived. Whether these were authentic or not, is another matter. According to Gibbon (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire): "The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enables us to dispel the dark clouds that hangs over the first age of the church".

PAGANISATION OF THE CHURCH

Message of love, brotherhood and salvation that Jesus brought found its roots in the Gentile lands rather slowly. But as it did, it absorbed the thoughts of the Greeks and of the pagans. When Paul and Barnabas cured a cripple in Lystra they were proclaimed Hermes and Zeus, the Greek gods, as the people considered them "gods come down to us in the likeness of man"(Acts 14:11).

While the Christian roots were taking strength the Roman Empire had been taken over by the Imperial Cult. Emperor Augustus accepted deification and temples were built for worship of his statues. The Senate accepted him as Son of God(Divi Filius). He was proclaimed "Caesar, who reigns over the seas and continents, Jupiter who holds from Jupiter his father the title of Liberator, Master of Europe and Asia, Star of all Greece, who lifts himself up with glory of great Jupiter, Saviour." The Emperor Caligula(37-41 C.E.) ordered all images of gods known for their beauty or veneration to be brought so their heads could be replaced by his own. Emperor Domitian(81-96 C.E.) ordered that he should be addressed as "Our Lord and Our God". With such veneration to the human emperors the Gentile Christians could not adopt any lower or inferior title for the Messiah, the Saviour. No wonder John's Gospel makes Thomas call Jesus as "My Lord and My God"(JN 20:28).

Greeks, Romans and other cults each had their own lords. Some of these cults regarded their "lords" to be of divine nature. Yet many believed them to have lived their lives upon earth as men, or women, and to have discovered their own labours and suffering the way to victory. As a consequence, they had achieved immortality and had been rendered divine. Greek and Hindu mythologies are full of such "gods". According to Cicero: "Hercules has gone to the gods. Never would he have gone thither, had he not, while still among men, made for himself that road... it was by his death that Hercules achieved immortality." Those earthly heroes who gained the secret and power to become immortal while yet on earth were often regarded as children of heavenly parents.

Thus pagan cultures provided a rich source for adopting new ideas about the new-found deity for the paganised Christianity. By the second century C.E. Christianity had been converted into another pagan cult. Jesus was the divine Lord. He too had found the road to heaven by his suffering and resurrection. He too had God for his father. He had left behind the secret whereby other men could also achieve the goal with him. The convert was buried with Christ and was born again in baptism. That Christianity was so regarded is perfectly clear from the pains Justin Martyr took to prove that these resemblances between Christianity and the other religions were all due to the malignity of the demons. "These wretched demons had read the scriptures and had realized, although imperfectly, what was destined to be. They trembled as they saw their coming overthrow and realized their helplessness to prevent it. To salvage as much as possible and to delude men they hastily concocted rites and ceremonies as near as possible to those they foresaw were to be instituted. Thus they hoped that when Christ appeared and instituted his worship men might be deluded into believing that the Christians were borrowing from older pagan ceremonies and beliefs"(Morton Scott Enslin: Christian Beginnings). Some similarities between Jesus of Christianity and some of the mythological figures of other religions and cults of the time are compared below:

Mithra, the Persian God: The long-awaited mediator born of a virgin, on 25th December, in a cave, called a "son of God", The Only Begotten, Herald of Peace, had 12 disciples. Died and after spending some days in hell, resurrected as part of God Himself, one of the "Three Greats", is to come again towards the end of the universe, Predicted the coming of a great saviour of the mankind.

Osiris, the Egyptian Sun God: Long cherished redeemer, son of Neith (Virgin of the world), born between 27th and 29th of December, called "Son of God", image of God on earth (Isis Unveiled), preached a gospel of love and peace, betrayed by Typhen and slain, but came to life after two days and three nights as "divine incarnate", will come again, prophesied the coming of "Prince of Peace". [The Egyptian Triad or Holy Trinity consists of Isis (the Divine Mother), Osiris (her brother and consort), Horus (their son)].

Baachus, the Greek god: Alpha and Omega of the world, cherished liberator, born to a virgin named Demeter (or Semele) on or about 25th December, "Son of Jupiter", came to guide his nation, was slain and resurrected, will come again, predicted the coming of a Mightier One.

Krishna, the Hindu Deity: Promised son of Vishnu (God, the Father), born to the virgin Devaki, on or about 25th December, preached justice, compassion and good faith, deserted by his followers except the favourite Arjuna. Slain, rose again from death, descended to swarg (Hell) and became Nirguna, incarnation of Vishnu, part of the Hindu Trinity (Brahma, Siva, Vishnu), to come in the later days of the universe. Promised the coming of "Mama".

Hindus consider that Krishna is an Avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu as are Rama and Buddha and some others. The tenth, and the last Avatar, Kalki, is to be a magnificent youth riding a great white horse with a meteor-like sword raining death and destruction on all sides. His coming will re-establish righteousness on earth and the return to purity and innocence [The kingdom of Heaven].

Buddha, Founder of Buddhism: The Beginning and End of the world, the destined sinner, born to virgin Mayadeva (or Hays) during December, called "son of Mahasmatta", advocate of love and peace, deserted by followers except Innuendo, died and entombed, resurrected. Incarnate whole of Mahasmatta, ascended to Nirvana, will return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. prophesied the coming of Mahabudh (The Greatest One).

Attis, the Phrygian god: Born of Virgin Nana, the only begotten son of the Most High Cybele, spilt his blood at the foot of a tree on March 24 for redemption of the sins of mankind, was resurrected on March 25 (parallel to Easter Sunday). His followers practiced baptism and Eucharist.

Zoroaster, Founder of the Parsi Religion: The promised "Light of God", virgin born on 25th December, "son of Divine Reason", Bastion of peace, died and entombed, resurrected as god, sharer of god-head, to come again, prophesied the coming of "Mohmend in Becca".

Tammuz, the Babylonian god: Born to a virgin, on 25th December; slain, buried in a tomb, leaving it vacant with the rock at the entrance rolled aside. Spent three days in Hades (Hell) and then permitted by the gods of the underworld to be resurrected. Known to Greeks as Adonis (Adon: Lord). Bethlehem was the ancient capital of the Tammuz cult with a shrine there which is said to have existed long into New Testament times.

Jesus: The "Word" with God, Long-awaited Messiah, born to virgin Mary on the 25th December in a cave/stable, "Son of God", the Only Begotten Son, preached love, had 12 disciples of whom one betrayed him and the others forsook him, crucified for the redemption of sins of mankind, entombed, descended to Hades (Hell), resurrected after two days and three nights, one of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Ghost), ascended to heaven, will return. Foretold the coming of the Paraclete.

There was scriptural evidence of Israel being Son of God, Firstborn, the only begotten (Ex 4:22, Hos 11:1, Jere 12:7). For a Son of David it had been said "I will be his father and he shall be my son (II Sam 7:14); "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps 2:7). Pauline doctrine of God the Father and Christ the Lord now became God the Father and God the Son. The religion based on monotheist Jesus retained his monotheism of Jewish roots in a three-part godhead consisting of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit or the TRINITY! The Gentiles who were accustomed to having three Co-Emperors of the Roman Empire felt quite at home with the new-found deity.

It had long been a tradition for Roman emperors to claim descent from the gods, and on that basis to claim godhead for themselves as well. Thus, Diocletian had claimed a pedigree from Jupiter, Maximian a pedigree from Hercules. For Constantine, especially after he had given Christianity a mandate in his dominions, it was advantageous to establish a new divine covenant, a new ratification from the sacred. This was all the more important, by virtue of the fact that he was, in some sense, a usurper — he had toppled a descendant of Hercules and needed a rival god's support for his own assertions of legitimacy. "In choosing a god for his sponsor or patron, Constantine turned, on a nominal level, at least, to the God of the Christians. He did not, it is important to note, turn to Jesus. The god Constantine acknowledged was God the Father who in those days prior to the Council of Nicaca, was not identical with the Son. His relation to Jesus was altogether more equivocal and extremely illuminating" (Michael Baigent, et. al.: *The Messianic Legacy*, pp. 38).

"It may indeed be questioned whether the Gentile Christians did not believe the Deity of Christ, for being so accustomed to the deifying, and conferring divine honors and worship upon men, it is more than probable that many did believe him to be a God in the Pagan sense as other Heroes and extraordinary men were reputed. And thus Pliny in his Inquisition after Christianity, found that they used to sing Hymns to Christ quasi Deo, as if he were a God. And Tertullian relating the same thing, says they did sing Hymns Christo and Deo, nor can there be doubt thereof or that there were many pieces of poetry composed by the brethren which ascribed a divinity to Christ. But if there be any ground for that assertion of Artemon, Apollophon, Hermophilus, and Theodotus, the most learned, subtle, and philosophical disputants (tho' stiled Hereticks) of the ancient Christians: that all the first Christians and even the Apostles themselves, were taught and did teach, that Christ was a mere man (which was their Tenet), that the truth of this doctrine was continued in the Church until the days of Pope Victor, who was the thirteenth Bishop of Rome after Peter; and that Zephyrinus his successor did alter and corrupt that truth: if it be true which the Arrians said, that none but Ideots and simple persons believed any such thing as the divinity of Christ, and that till the decision at Nice the more knowing Christians did not hold him to be really God: if we may conceive that they were firmly taught that there was but one God, and that they were too dull to comprehend or invent those subtle distinctions of Essence, and person, Consubstantiation, eternal Generation, etc.: if it be certain that the Fathers after the Nicene Council were not agreed concerning the meaning of these uncouth words, and that the world was long after dissatisfied with the use of them: if such as Gregory Nazianzen & Basil were shy how they taught the Deity of the Holy Ghost, or of Christ, or touched upon the Trinity, Homousianism: etc., if we reflect upon the Creed instituted to the Apostles, and certainly very ancient, that there is no intimation thereof in it: if we take notice how differently the Fathers explicate themselves upon that point, and how much the other works of Athanasius do differ from the Creed which passes under his name, — we may very well doubt concerning their judgment in this matter, and may have sufficient grounds to conclude that it was not a doctrine taught them at first or believed by the wiser converts, but that the vulgar Gentiles according to their Custom

attributing a divinity to Christ upon the account of his extraordinary Acts and Miracles, the hint being improved by adapting some passages in the New Testament to the Platonick Philosophy, produced that and the doctrine of Trinity.

"As to their Rites and Church Government, the Apostle of the Uncircumcision, who became all things to almen that he might gain them to Christ, did comply with their weakness and prejudices. Many Pagan usages and Superstitions were retained, their Church Government was modelled much according to the Pagan usage in their Temples and Sodalites ... Any man conversant in Antiquity knows that a multitude of Pagan usages crept in, or rather were continued, among the Christians; and tho' they did not Sacrifice, yet they brought to their Priests at the Altar the first-fruits, as had been formerly practised to the Rural Gods, and rather the Objects of the Devotion were changed then the things abolished. The same Festivals were retained in a manner to the honor of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints, which were before celebrated to Mercury, Venus genetrix, Bacchus, and the Rural Deities. But if there ever were such a legion as that termed Fulminatrix, in the Army of the Emperor Adrian, or the Legio Thebaea (both famed in Ecclesiastical Story), or any Legionary Soldiers that professed Christianity, I am confident they never had an Dispensation from worshiping the Roman Eagle. And I am the more confirm'd in this sentiment, since even under the Christian Emperors the Imperial Banner call'd Labarum was in like manner worshiped (Henry Stubbe: op. cit.).

The First Council of Nicaea held in 325 C.E. ruled in favour of Trinitarianism. Thus from Jesus' strictly Jewish concept of Monotheism, and Paul's God the Father/Christ the Lord ambiguity, Christianity was forced to adopt Father/Son/Holy Ghost formula as a statement of faith. The advocates of Unitarianism already banished before even the Council had begun, the "Statement", later to be called the Nicene Creed, was easily pushed through to be signed "by some learned, some merely pious, some under the awe of the Emperor. For all those who signed there was the inducement of an invitation to stay on at Nicaea as Constantine's guests for his twentieth anniversary celebrations. For those who refused was immediate banishment.... Only on returning home did Eusebius of Nicomedia, Maris of Chalcedon and Theognis of Nicaea summon the courage to express to Constantine in writing how much they regretted having put their signatures to the Nicene formula: We committed an impious act, O Prince, by subscribing to a blasphemy for fear of you. Wrote Eusebius (Ian Wilson: Jesus, the Evidence).

This Council of Nicaea took many other far-reaching decisions: standardization of the date of Easter, declaration of Sun-day to be the Christian Sabbath, adoption of the emblem of the Sun-god the Cross of Light to be the emblem of Christianity, incorporation of many ceremonies which were performed at Sun-god's birth-day celebrations into Christian ceremonies and granting patriarchal authority to the bishop of Alexandria.

The First Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) was significant as the model and the original of later ecumenical councils. The First Council of Constantinople, the second ecumenical council, was convened by Theodorus I to confirm the acts of the Council of Nicaea in 381 C.E. It formally approved the Nicene dogma and the Nicene Creed was composed and adopted. This second ecumenical council made the Bishop of Constantinople second only to Pope in precedence. This was the beginning of the creation of an "Eastern Church" at Constantinople. Significantly none of the representatives of the Western churches with the Papal seat at Rome attended this council.

Constantine's acceptance and then patronage of Christianity was never a matter of conviction but rather of expediency and design. He could see that inspite of ruthless suppression the faith could not be obliterated. Instead of fighting the followers of Jesus it would be advantageous to his imperial objectives to have these alligned on his side. In 313 C.E. he issued

the Edict of Milan in conjunction with his brother-in-law Licinius, who ruled the eastern half of the empire: "The emperors proclaim to the world that they have granted a free and absolute power to the Christians, and to all others, of following the religion which each individual thinks proper, to which he has addicted his mind and which he may deem the best adapted to his use" (E. Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*). This patronage meant that Christians could now practice their religion and organize their Churches freely. Not only that, Constantine even encouraged people to become Christians. Every convert was awarded a white garment and twenty pieces of gold on baptism. He ensured that the clergy were kept comfortable and thus be grateful to him personally. In this manner he saw to it that they remained subservient to him.

Constantine made full use of the Church in maintaining discipline in his army. The authority of the Bishop was used to ratify the obligation of the military oath. Deserters faced the added threat of excommunication. The bishops in distant corners of the empire became watchdogs of Constantine's interests and they themselves became powerful under the new-found freedom and direct relationship with the Emperor.

"Ever since Alexander had broken down the barrier between east and west, eastern cults had been rushing into the vacuum left by the decay of faith. These "mystery religions" were all alike connected with the yearly miracle of life through death, winter the mother of spring. A young god comes from the east, is set upon and torn to pieces by the rude western gods, but comes to life again, and at his table his worshippers eating his flesh and drinking his blood become themselves immortal. This immortality is attained by a series of initiations, all of which symbolized more or less clearly the ultimate mystery of life through death. There were baser sides to these cults, as was inevitable in religions so closely associated with the idea of fertility, but they were obviously a most effective preparation for Christianity. It was an age, like ours, of freak religions and strange secret cults, of higher thought and theosophy, of dabbling in magic. Men passed from one of these cults to another, getting some good and then going on. No religion had a chance in the world that was not a religion of redemption, not so much redemption from sin as from death and decay" (G.H. Davies, et. al., ed.: *Twentieth Century Bible Commentary*).

"The Church took over some religious customs and forms common in pre-historic [Pagan] Rome: the stole and other vestments of pagan priests, the use of incense and holy water in purifications, the burning of candles and an everlasting light before the altar, the worship of saints, the architecture of the basilica, the law of Rome as a basis for Canon law, the title of PONTIFEX MAXIMUS for the Supreme Pontiff (Pope) and, in the fourth century, the Latin language ... Soon the bishops, rather than the Roman prefects, would be the source of order and the seat of power in the cities; the metropolitans, or archbishops, would support, if not supplant, the provincial governors; and the synod of bishop would succeed the provincial assembly. The Roman Church followed in the footsteps of the Roman state" (Will Durant: *The Story of Civilization, Part III: Caesar and Christ*).

"We may now conceive naturally that the Christians must totally disclaim the Jews, and pretend only to a Spiritual Messiah, since they could not have preserved themselves but by so doing; and undoubtedly not long after that we find mention of Priests, Temples, etc., and the Rites of the Church did evidently comply with Paganism. What befell the Judaizing Churches, I know not, but they became in little Esteem, and sank at last under the name of Ebionites and other Hereticks. This Revolution had a mighty influence upon Christianity, and Adrian in his letter to Servianus, wherein he gives him an account of Aegypt, doth avow that all the Christians there, besides their devotion to Christ, did worship Serapis.

"And tho' Christianity were not extirpated, it changed much its complexion, The Opinion of a temporal Messiah was laid aside, Subjection to the Pagan Magistrate preached, many dissolute and enormous Assemblies disowned, and declared Heretical; the Christians fought for the Gentile Emperors, and watch'd at the Temples to defend them, declaring them to be no Martyrs who were punished for disturbing or demolishing them. Much of their Rigor and Strictness was abolished, or preserved only in a few Monasteries; and as the Christians suffer'd this alteration and were infected by the Conversation and Superstitions of the Pagans, so these on the other side became much altered by mixing with the Christians: they were inclin'd to a Contempt of their Gods, and an indifferency in their Religion; they were expensiveness of their Rites and Devotions. The Discipline of the Roman Legions being extinct, and the Armies composed most of Forreigners, men of mercenary spirits, and no friends to the establish'd Religion, these Soldiery beheld opulent Preists and Vestals, together with their Colledges, with an envious Eye, and cared not if a new Religion were introduced, so that they might share the spoils of the old.

"In this juncture, and under these Circumstances, I find Constantine to have made himself Emperor. Right he had none, being a Bastard, and not elected nor admitted by the Senate; his Sword was his Title, and success warrant'd it. His soldiers were not more inclin'd to him upon the Assurance of his Courage and Conduct than animated by the Hope of Honor and Riches which the conquest of Italy, and change of Religion and Government, would instate them in. He by new Honours gave great Lustre to the Church, and insured his own Secular Power by advancing the Ecclesiastical, and that of the Christian Bishops, these being Spies and Cheks upon his Governours; and since Rome and Alexandria were the two places that had most influence upon his Empire, he and his successors advanced these Prelates to a kind of Princely dignity, that they might gain the greater Veneration among the people, and equal the splendor of the Pagan Preists.

"Then began Temples to be dedicated with as much Solemnity by the Christians as ever any were by the Pagans, and intitled to the Apostles, Martyres, and Angels. for magnificence and largeness they were equal to those of the Heathens; and as in the fabrick & dedication of Churches the resemblance of Paganism was introduced, so the ecclesiastical Government was made paralel to it.

"The Christians had great encouragements and immunities to support them, and great Privileges were enacted for such as turned to that Religion, and Penalties frequently decreed and oftentimes rigorously inflicted on the Pagans, so that the only thing that contributed to the prejudice of Christianity was their divisions among themselves, in which, by mutually exposing each other's Lives and Doctrines, all the parties became equally contemptive and ridiculous. Besides the petty Sects occasion'd by pure ignorance, folly, or Madness (of which kinds the Catalogues of Hereticks do present us with many), which were easily extinguish'd by the Imperial power, or fell of themselves, there were three potent Sects which gave a great check to the more facil and complaisant Christianity of the Empire. The donatists, who possessed in a manner all Africk and had some hold in Italy; the Arrians, who possessed in great part the Eastern Empire; and the Novations, who were with great Repute for purity and piety diffused in all places where Christianity had prevailed: these three Sects being all settled under their Espiscopal Regliments with distinct Churches" (Henry Stubbe: op.cit.).

"Paganism survived in the moral sense, as a joyous indulgence of natural appetites; as a religion it remained only in the from of ancient rites and customs condoned, or accepted and transformed, by an often indulgent Church. An intimate and trustful worship of saints replaced the cult of the pagan gods, and satisfied the congenial polytheism of simple or poetic minds.

Statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus; the Roman Lupercalia and the feast of Isis became the Feast of the Nativity; the Saturnalia were replaced by Christmas celebrations, the Floralia by Pentecost, an ancient festival of the dead by All Saints Day, the resurrection of Attis by the resurrection of Christ. Pagan altars were rededicated to Christian heroes; incense, lights, flowers, processions, vestments, hymns, which had pleased the people in older cults were domesticated and cleansed in the ritual of the Church; and the harsh slaughter of a living victim was sublimated in the spiritual sacrifice of the Mass. . . . The Church . . . wisely accepted the inevitable anthropomorphism of popular theology. She resisted, then used, then abused, the cult of martyrs and relics . . . The Church denounced magic, astrology, and divination, but medieval, like ancient, literature was full of them; soon people and priests would use the sign of the cross as a magic incantation to expel or drive away demons"(Will Durant: The Story of Civilization, Vol.IV—The Age of Faith).

The controversies on various doctrines within the church did not entirely die. The Council of Ephesus, the third ecumenical council, convened in 449 C.E. declared that Christ's humanity was absorbed in his divinity. This council was clandestinely arranged and maneuvered. It is commonly known as the "Robber Synod"(see later, The Nestorian Schism). This was the beginning of the creation of an "Eastern Church" at Constantinople. The Council of Chalcedon, the fourth ecumenical council, was called in 452 C.E. by Pulcheria and Marcian, the Empress and Emperor of the Eastern Empire, to undo the principals adopted at the Council of Ephesus. Its great work, however, was its DEFINITION, the last pronouncement of the Catholic Christological position: Jesus Christ, second Person of the Trinity, is both true God and true man; his divine and human natures are distinct without confusion and inseparably united to concur in one person. It also pronounced the patriarch of Constantinople single head of the church in Eastern Europe.

The Second Council of Constantinople, the fifth ecumenical council, was convened in 553 C.E. by Emperor Justinian with no Western delegates present. The original canons of this Council are lost. The Third Council of Constantinople, the sixth ecumenical council, was convened by Constantine IV in 680 C.E. and it defined the orthodox faith by accepting a separate will and operation in each of the natures of Christ. In continuation of this Council was the Oriental Council(Trullan Synod) called by Justinian II in 692 C.E. which was entirely legislative with anti-Western tone.

The Second Council of Nicaea, the seventh ecumenical council, called by Empress Irene in 787 C.E. declared that the images ought to be venerated, not worshiped, and ordered them restored in the churches. Thus Christian churches were now free to install images, statues, and the kind under the garb of "veneration, not worship" in direct contravention of the commandment which laid down that "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything.....". The Holy Christian Church had now been fully paganised!

The Fourth Council of Constantinople, regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as the eighth ecumenical council, was convened in 869-70 C.E. but the Orthodox(Eastern) Church called its own council in 890 C.E. The result of these councils was to intensify the bitterness between the Eastern and Western Churches.

How the decisions of these councils corrupted and adulterated the original concepts of Jesus is better indicated by the distortion that occurred in respect of the cult of Mary, mother of Jesus. At the Council of Ephesus it was adopted that Mary should be entitled THEOTOKOS, God-bearing, and therefore "Mother of God". In 1854 C.E. Pope Pius IX made it an article of faith for all Catholics that Mary should be considered "immaculately conceived" -- that is, from the moment of her conception incapable of sin. A century later Pope Pius XII pronounced her

Queen of Heaven. Who knows what turn this cult may take in future -- Could she be made another person of the Quadrant Godhead, equal in status to the other three persons of the Holy Trinity? God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost might be made an even number by including God the Mother! After all there have been nations who have considered God to be a female rather than a male. Through the infallibility of the Popes nothing is impossible.

The schism within Christianity widened especially starting with Martin Luther's Protestant movement. He was summoned to the Diet of Worms in 1521 C.E. and excommunicated but his movement grew. Even though divided into several churches, Protestantism is now a substantial part of Christianity.

WHY JUST FOUR GOSPELS?

As we study the Gospels we realise that the stories of Jesus' life that the Gospels tell are different from each other. This is even so between the three synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke which draw from the same original source. The reason which is often put forward is that written by different persons these tell the story from different perspectives. But we have already seen that there are contradictions between the different versions as given in these four Gospels. Different not just in opinions but more so in material facts. There are also major omissions. For example, John's Gospel includes the prophecy about the coming of a Comforter, Advocate, or however we may translate the word "Paraclete", who will complete, or at least try to complete, the task which Jesus was leaving behind incomplete. The three synoptic Gospels do not even hint of this important promise by Jesus.

The fact that each of the canonised Gospels, and indeed every other Gospel in circulation, was extant in a limited church circle must have been instrumental in creating doctrines of local nature due to the limited view of a particular Gospel. For example, those not in possession of the Gospel of John, must have been ignorant about Jesus' promise of his despatching of the "Comforter". Since John's Gospel was written around 100 C.E., the whole Christian community never knew anything about the "Comforter", until John's disclosure. Did he ever come? "Acts of the Apostles" supposed to have been written by Luke tells us about coming of the Holy Ghost at the time of Pentecost but Holy Ghost had always been there. Those who claim that Holy Spirit/Ghost was indeed the "Comforter" ignore that if it be so then Jesus did not have to ask "Father" to send it (he?) because he(it?) must have always been there. Similarly, those not having access to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke must have been unaware about Jesus' virgin birth. It seems Paul himself was such a person because all the canonical Gospels were written after he was already dead. None of his Epistles refer to virgin birth as well as many other events in Jesus' life important to the formulation of many Christian doctrines based on Gospel information.

But there are four Gospels, why not one, two, three, or even more than four? There is no "divine" basis of selection of these Gospels or even other books in the New Testament. The figure four seems to have developed as a consequence of debates within the various churches and church dignitaries. In the second century C.E. Tatian took a look at the available Gospels and wrote one of his own. It is known as Diatessaron. After all, there was no sanctity to others that were already available in the field. At about the same time Marcion, who founded his own church, favoured Luke's Gospel but finding it deficient made some alterations in it. His church was considered heretic and his followers severely persecuted. During the same period Irenaeus, the prestigious and powerful bishop of Lyons, decided that church needed four Gospels, to match with the four directions of the world. The church at the time believed that

the earth was flat(not round and spherical) and had its four corners. His idea gradually caught up until the Council of Nicaea in 325 C. decided to include just four gospels in the new canon.

THE NESTORIAN SCHISM

The Nicene emphasis on the deity of Christ brought into fresh prominence the problem of his humanity: if Christ were fully deity, to what extent and in what way could he also be human? This problem, which had exercised the Gnostics in the second century and Origen in the third, was brought into prominence again by Apollinarius, bishop of Laodicea, who had put forward a Christology based on the Greek idea of man as a tripartite body: animal, soul, and intellect. In Christ, intellect was replaced by the Logos, the eternally generated Word of God, which Apollinarius held to be fully deity. This view had been condemned at the Council of Constantinople on the ground that without a human intellect Christ could not be regarded as really man. Moreover, if Christ were not completely human, his sacrifice as man for men would be to that extent defective, as Gregory of Nazianus cogently put it, 'that which is unassumed is unheaded'.

"Cyril, bishop of Alexandria [considered that] the Logos, pre-existing as a hypostatic distinction in the God-head, united with Himself complete manhood. But the union was not in the nature of a mere contact or bond. The Logos had not only assumed flesh, but had become flesh. So Christ was the Logos united with a complete human being; but so perfect was the union that the two natures, divine and human, constituted only one person [i.e. hypostatic union]. Nevertheless the two natures were not confused or mingled, 'the flesh is flesh and not deity, even if it has become flesh of God'; so that the one person still possessed the two complete natures and could assess experiences according to each of them: as the Logos, His divine nature was impossible and unchangeable; but through the humanity He had taken to Himself, He entered into all human feelings. Thus one person experienced through two perfectly united natures. This ability to experience through both natures, although there is only one person, is explained as due to an interchange between the natures of their respective characteristics, the 'communication idiomatum' of Latin theology. This last phrase is difficult to render precisely, but perhaps 'sharing characteristics' may serve. In this way the experiences of the God-men are both truly divine and truly human.(It will be seen that all this involves one rather serious difficulty: The Incarnation is simply an event in the eternal life of the Logos, but a beginning for the human life of His assumed manhood; but though there are two natures, there is only one person; one of the natures must be impersonal. As it is obvious that the Logos cannot be impersonal, the human nature must be so regarded). To make the union of natures absolute and complete, it seemed necessary to postulate that the process of fusion proceeded 'in utero' from the moment of conception. It would follow that the Virgin Mary, in bearing the man Jesus, bore also the Logos, that is, Deity: the Virgin 'had borne the Incarnate Word according to the flesh'. Now while this is quite logical and unexceptionable, the same idea, when expressed by applying the title Theotokos('bearer of God') to the Virgin Mary, was in danger of extension beyond its proper limits. Rightly understood, the epithet is innocuous. But if loosely interpreted as 'Mother of God', there would obviously be danger of the Virgin Mary being popularly regarded almost as a goddess(Aubrey R. Vine: *The Nestorian Churches*, pp. 23-26).[At an early stage the African Church did consider "God the Mother" to be part of the Trinity — Father, Son, and the Holy Mother — excluding the Holy Ghost]

Nestorius who had been presbyter at Antioch became Bishop of Constantinople in April 428 C.E. and immediately got involved in the controversy over the term Theotokos and suggested replacing it with 'Christotokos'('bearer of Christ'), meaning thereby that 'Mary did not bear

the Godhead; she bore a man who was the organ of the God-head'. However, he was prevailed upon to accept the term Theotokos while insisting that its popular implications be not unduly pressed. Nestorius' position, however diluted by now, was opposed by Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, who was in fact jealous of Nestorius' elevation to the important see of Constantinople. Cyril won over Celestine, bishop of Rome, to his side. These two powerful bishops prevailed upon the Pope to condemn Nestorius for his 'heresy' and demand that Nestorius recant his views within ten days or be regarded as excommunicated. The terms of the letter contained twelve anathemas drawn by Cyril in such a manner as to ensure Nestorius' excommunication.

Sensing the trouble Nestorius prevailed upon the Emperor Theodosius II to issue invitations for an ecumenical council to investigate the whole matter. The invitations were issued before the arrival of the papal letter so as to forestall its implementation. "The ecumenical council was called for Whit-Sunday, June 7th, 431 C.E., and was to meet at Ephesus. The proceedings reflected unfavourably on all concerned. The Syrian bishops, under the leadership of John of Antioch, arrived more than a fortnight late and the Roman legates still later. Cyril, meanwhile, had insisted on the council being opened. The emperor's commissioner, Count Candidian, protested in vain, and the proceedings began. Nestorius refused to appear before so unrepresentative an assembly consisting for the most part of Egyptian partisans of Cyril. He was therefore condemned in absentia ... When the Syrians arrived, however, they at once joined with Nestorius in holding a rival council in which they in turn deposed Cyril as well as Memnon, the bishop of Ephesus. But when the Roman legates arrived, they sided with Cyril. Theodosius, acquainted with this unseemly impasse, appointed a second commissioner Count John, who cut the Gordian knot by confirming all three depositions (Aubrey R. Vine: op Cit).

While Nestorius relegated to the monastery at Euprepis, the clever Cyril was able to regain his prestige and power and eventually made peace with the Antiocheans. According to the terms Cyril's twelve anathemas were not specifically endorsed while Antiochean confession of faith was accepted. The Antiocheans had to accept the validity of Cyril's section of the council regarding the anathematizing of Nestorius as a price for this peace. Nestorius died in exile voluntarily deciding not to rekindle the debate. The only relief to his exile was the conviction that [bishops] Leo and Flavian were inclining to his position. Ironically it must be reckoned that had Nestorius been victorious in the struggle he would have been quite tough with his opponents. In fact he started his bishopric by beginning a vigorous campaign of suppression against Arians, Novations, and Quartodecimans.

Although Nestorius was banished, the ideas which he had represented were not left without exponents one such being Ibas of Edessa. The theological school at Edessa was particularly important for the Antiochean clergy who were trained here because of the difficult conditions under the Persian rule.

Cyril was succeeded at his death by Dioscorus who was as jealous as Cyril for supremacy of the Alexandrian see over that of the Constantinopolitan see presided over by Flavian. Such jealousies led to the calling of a synod at Constantinople which was called illegal by Dioscorus. The Emperor Theodosius II ordered a general council to be called at Ephesus. Both sides appealed to Leo, bishop of Rome, who in his "Tome of Leo" maintained that since the issue of nature of Jesus/God had already been decided no council was needed. Nevertheless, the council was held. It met at Ephesus in 449 C.E., and Dioscorus presided. More by intimidation than argument, Dioscorus had everything his own way. The whole of the proceedings was undignified and violent, so much that Flavian died as the result of the rough

treatment he received there. Leo indignant at the sight implied upon himself, declared that the council was nothing better than a gathering of robbers(lactrocinium), and of no authority. Leo's epithet was apt enough to be adopted, and the assembly is usually referred to as the Robber Synod or Lactrocinium. It is not reckoned among the ecumenical councils. A council was accordingly held at Chalcedon in 451 C.E. While the(Robber) Synod at Ephesus had anathematized Ibas of Edess and Theodoret of Cyprus, the Chalcedonian council reversed the decision and in its turn condemned and deposed Dioscorus who was banished. Ibas returned to Edessa only to find his prestige having been hurt during his long absence and harangings of anti-Nestorian opponents. He died in 457 C.E.

It now became clear that no church in Christendom could sustain itself without powerful backing of the state. The Nestorian 'heresy' therefore moved to Persia which hitherto had accepted Roman supremacy(being in Antiochean bishopric) and now was to assert its own independence as the Persian(or Eastern) Church.

The whole episode discomfortingly depicts the process of the formation of Christian dogma on the basis of personal whims, preferences, jealousies and intrigues. God may have made man in His own image but Man insists in creating God according to his own selfish imagination.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

According to Luke "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night"(2:8). The winter in Palestine is harsh and the sheep must be taken to warm shelters. If the sheep were still in the fields then it must be before mid-October before the rains start. Yet the Christmas is celebrated on 25th December!

Incidentally, the story of the shepherds is brought in by Luke to bring in an angel who heralds the birth of "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"(LK 2:11). The shepherds hear the angel and "a multitude of heavenly host praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men"(LK 2:13-14). There is an element of mistranslation here in KJV. The words "on earth peace, goodwill toward men" ought to be better translated as "peace on earth to men of goodwill" [In the actual Greek words: "men of satisfaction". [NIV translates this as 'peace on earth to men on whom his favour rests']. Thus those glad tidings are limited only to believers; the non-believers are clearly excluded. It is also odd that only one angel comes to announce the good news, but many "angels" go away to heaven(LK 2:15). The shepherds then go to Bethlehem and see the new born "Christ the Lord" as advised by the angel(s) and "they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child". Yet the news did not creat any stir among the people nor did Herod or his spies learn about the holy child.

The story about the star (of the Magi) and angels' song of "peace on earth" seems to have their roots in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, especially the Testament of Levi(18:2-4):

"Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest.

And to him all the words of the Lord shall be revealed.

And he shall execute a righteous judgement

upon the earth for a multitude of days

And his star shall arise in heaven as of a king

And there shall be peace in all the earth"

According to the narrative in Luke soon after the angel informed Mary about the birth of her son she "arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of

Judah; and entered into the house of Zecharias and saluted Elizabeth"(LK 1:39,40). The angel had already told Mary that "thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren"(LK 1:36). "And Mary abode with her about three months and returned to her house"(LK 1:56). John the Baptist was born soon after. If Mary became pregnant not long before her visit to Elizabeth then she should also give birth to Jesus not later than six months thereafter.

Zecharias was a priest in the course of Abijah at the Temple in Jerusalem. Every course had its fixed days of duty at the Temple as was established in the reign of King David, there being 24 courses or shifts. Every course served for one week at a time beginning and ending on the Sabbath day. The eighth course, the course of Abijah in which Zecharias served, worked in the ninth week and stayed on for the 10th course as well along with all other courses for the celebration of the festival of Pentecost. It was during this period, sometimes at the end of spring, that Gabriel conveys the good news to Zecharias(LK 1:8-20) about his own child. Soon thereafter Zecharias and his wife Elizabeth returned to their home and Elizabeth conceived and must have given birth in late March or early April. Jesus being born six months later must have been born in late September or early October, when the sheep were still in the fields before being brought under shelter. That would also be the period when taxes were collected, at the end of the harvest in the fall. Yet Christmas is celebrated on 25th December!

There is no indication in the New Testament of any celebration of Christmas (the birth of Jesus) or of Easter to commemorate his resurrection. Origen writing in 245 C.E. repudiated the idea of any such celebration "as if he were a Pharaoh". Such celebrations for great heroes were common. Since little was known about the date of Jesus' birth from Matthew or Luke, people speculated on this account. The first certain mention of December 25 is in the first-ever calendar of Philocalus: "Jesus Christ was born on December 25 AD I, a Friday, on 15th day of the new moon". In actual fact December 25 AD I, was a Sunday! Clement of Alexandria mentions various speculations by chronologists such as 25th of the Egyptian month of Pachon in the 28th year of Augustus which would be May 20; also 24th or 25th Phurmuthi which would be April 19 or 20. Clement himself thought it could be November 17 in the year 3 B.C.E. The anonymous author of a Latin tract *De Pascha Compatus* writing circa 243 C.E. somewhere in Africa mentions Wednesday the 28th March which is the supposed anniversary of the creation of the sun, calling Jesus the Sun of Righteousness. Polycarp, on similar assumptions considered Jesus' birth to be on a Sunday being the day of creation of the Universe. Clement, however, condemns all such speculations as mere superstition. So why the institution of Christmas in December?

In the Northern Hemisphere the sun is at its highest towards the third week of June when the days are longest. It steadily falls in the sky toward winter and is lowest in the third week of December when the days are the shortest. The steady decline of the sun and lengthening periods of darkness were portents of something dreadful to the superstitious people of old times. What if the sun did not ever rise again? The beginning of its rise at the winter solstice(Latin for "sun halt") was something to be celebrated. The ancient Persians celebrated the day in honour of the Sun-god and the cult is known as Mithraism. Romans celebrated the festival of Saturnalia, in honor of Saturn, their god of Agriculture. This was a great festival lasting several days. In 274 C.E. the Roman emperor Aurelian set December 25 as the day of the birth of the sun in the manner of Mithraism. Thus December 25 was fixed as the pagan Roman Brumalia, the final day of the weeklong Saturnalia celebrations in honour of the god Saturn. It was the day of the Invincible Sun. In order to appease the Roman sun-god worshippers who were converted to Christianity December 25 was adopted as the day of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. In 351 C.E. Pope Julius I formally decreed December 25 to be Christ's Mass

day. [Due to differences in the calendar, Orthodox Church celebrates Christmas about two weeks later in January.]

There is another aspect of the adoption of the festival of Christmas. "The imperial religion did not merely consist in adoration of a sometimes brutalized emperor; it had its idealist core, for it expressed devotion to a world-brotherhood, of which the emperor was the symbol. At first it was the late emperor who was worshiped; later it was the reigning emperor. There can be no question as to its popularity in the east, where the emperor's face was seldom seen. "The birthday of God was the beginning of good tidings of great joy to all nations" is not a Christian sentiment; it is an inscription in honour of the emperor's birthday. He was "king of kings, and Lord of lords", "God manifest in the flesh", his birthday was the Lord's day, his coming to a town "an Advent". Towns satisfied their local pride by competitively splendid celebrations of the emperor's birthday. This kept men quiet, gave them something innocuous to do but did not satisfy their minds or hearts. . . .The free population of the city of Rome, apart from the civil service, was kept quiet by "panem et circenses" ("bread and circus" displays), or, as we should say, the dole and the pictures, for the provinces were taxed to feed and amuse the capital" (G. H. Davies, et. al., ed.: Twentieth Century Bible Commentary).

"The question is posed as to why should there be an objection to celebration of Jesus' birthday on December 25 which is as good as any other day given that we do not know the real birth date. We have already pointed out the pagan connection with the present date of celebrating Christmas. Further comments are provided by the editors of the Plain Truth magazine (March 1992, pp.25); "A peculiar trait of a human nature is to do what seems right to the natural mind — celebrating an unknown birthdate of Jesus — and to forget what God and Christ have asked us to do — commemorate annually at the Passover the death of the Messiah. It is not the question of taking Christ out of Christmas and leaving Christmas as part of culture. What is important is the celebration of the festival God commanded . . . Funny thing is that neither God, nor Jesus, asked anybody to celebrate Christmas. At least there is no such commandment in the New Testament itself. This is nothing but the pagan leaven. According to 1 Cor(15:6): 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump'. Christmas and other pagan customs have poisoned the whole Christian culture."

Adoption of pagan myths and traditions by a faith which had itself been based on a myth was natural and expected. Pope Gregory I in instructing the missionaries clarified the church policy about the local cultures: "Let the shrines of the idols by no means be destroyed. Let water be consecrated and sprinkled in these temples; let altars be erected.. so that the people, not seeing their temples destroyed, may displace errors, and recognise and adore God.....and because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to the devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this.....they could celebrate a religious feast and worship God by feasting, so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys"(BEDE: Eccl. Hist of the English Nation).

Christianity did not destroy paganism, it adopted it. "The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the Church; the Greek language, having reigned for centuries over philosophy, became the vehicle of Christian literature and ritual; the Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass"(Will Durant: The History of Civilization).

ANUNCIATION AND EPIPHANY

If the date of birth of Jesus is fixed at 25th December, a convenient date of Mary's conception will be March 25 which is the Feast of Anunciation. The date of Epiphany, or the coming of the Magi is to be on January 6.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Romans carried out crucifixion of their victims in a number of manners. In the case of Jesus there is considerable doubt whether Jesus, if he was indeed "crucified", was fastened/nailed to a cross, that is two cross-beams of wood as we see in pictures with Jesus' arms stretched out. The original Greek manuscripts use the word "STY-ROS" or stake/torture stake, which was a single beam of wood that was stuck in the ground and the victim was fastened/nailed to it with arms stretched high above the head. MK(15:21,32), MT(27:32,42), LK(23:26), JN(19:17,25,31), all use the word "stake". In other places for the act of "crucifixion" the word "impaled on the stake" is the more appropriate translation [For example MK(15:20,29); MT(27:2631,35), LK(23:32), JN(19,15,16,23)]. The modern English "to carry one's own cross", a King James Version mistranslation of "carrying one's own stake" and attributed to Jesus(MT 10:38,16:24 and LK 14:27), itself seems certainly to be a later invention and was most likely not spoken by Jesus in such words as the Aramaic did not carry any such proverb.

The root word 'styros' appears about 40 times in the New Testament and could only imply a "stake". The word "Crux" or the cross is nowhere used. Even so, crux itself does not necessarily mean a cross beam. In Latin, crux means "tree, frame or other wooden instrument of execution". In the writings of Livy, a Roman historian of the first century B.C.E., crux is used for a stake. To distinguish it from different types of frames the stake was also known as "crux simplex".

It is interesting that when Peter and others were produced before the Sanhedrin, they said: "... Jesus, whom you manhandled having hanged upon wood"(Acts 5:30). The word used here is Xylon or a piece of wood, a stake. For "hanging" the word used here is the same as in LK(23:39) and Acts(10:39). Paul is also stated to have used the word Xylon(Acts 13:29) while talking of crucifixion. It is interesting to note how different versions translate this particular sentence differently.

KJV	whom ye slew and hanged on a tree
NIV/RSV	killed by hanging him on a tree
TJB	executed by hanging on a tree
NAS	put him to death by hanging him on a cross.
NWT	whom you slew, hanging him upon a stake
RBV	put to death by hanging on a cross
GNB	killed him by nailing him to a cross
NEB	Done to death by hanging him on a gibbet

According to Thorndike-Barnhart dictionary GIBBET means "An upright post with a projecting arm at the top, from which the bodies of criminals were hung after execution; gallows". It must thus be something more like a gallow and certainly not a cross. [It is amazing how brazenly NAS, RBV and GNB translate tree/gibbet as a "cross"]

To the Jews anyone "hanged on a tree" was accursed of God(Deut 21:23). By association, the "tree" on which someone was hanged was itself considered accursed. So for the purpose of hanging they never used a live tree with any roots but rather a piece of wood, a stake, which was also buried immediately as were those who died on it. To go to any extra effort for preparing a cross-beam, which would then need special cross-makers(an accursed profession by implication), would be considered unnecessary. Romans were careful about religious sensitivities of the Jews. The cross-beam would after all serve no additional purpose. Simple styros/xylon, meaning a stake/timber was easily available and needed no advance construction.

Crucifixions were not a too frequent occurrence and there would be no need to keep stacks of cross-beams in readiness. With the unusual haste with which Jesus is said to have been "crucified" there was no time to prepare one (in fact three, including two for the other two condemned robbers). Being an accursed sign the early Judo-Christians must have been abhorrant to its depiction in any form, let alone its use for veneration.

Until Constantine became the patron of Christianity, the Christians were despised by the Jews, the Romans and the Greeks alike. They were mostly the downtrodden and looked upon with suspicion. There were large gatherings at certain places but in many places and many a times small bands of poor, slaves, and the like would worship secretly. To identify themselves to each other they had adopted the sign of Chi-Rho (XP) containing the first two letters of the name Christ. It is said that on the night before he attacked Rome, Constantine had a dream in which he saw this sign and was told that by this sign you shall be victorious. It is very likely that Constantine made this up in order to ensure the allegiance of his Christian subjects with their religious zeal. He had this sign painted on the shields of his soldiers (many of whom were Christians). When his victorious solidiers entered Rome with the sign of Chi-Rho emblazoned on their shields, pagan sun-worshiper Constantine became the patron of Christianity although he himself remained a sun-worshiper until his death-bed conversion as a Unitarian. Roman Catholics know him as Saint Constantine.

The sign of the cross was in fact the sign of Sol Invetus, the pagan Sun-god. It seems to have been used by the Christians after 312 C.E. after the edict of Milan (The Roman Catholic "Ecclesiastical Review" September 1920, Baltimore, Md., U.S.A.). No monogram of the cross, discovered in the catacombs, or other places, can be traced to any period earlier than that. It is not a coincidence that Constantine the sun-worshiper, came to power in the year 312 C.E. Although in the East there was still abhorrence to representational imagery due to Jewish tradition, in the West the Christians had already been representing Jesus as the pagans would with sun-god Apollos or Orpheus, the priest of sun. The Council of Nicaea held in 325 C.E. formerly endorsed the new sign. Christianity and the cult of sun-god freely mingled under the approving diplomacy Constantine needed to stabilise his vast empire.

SUNDAY

According to the fourth commandment: "Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all the work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Deut 5:12,13). The seventh day of the week being Saturday was observed by the Jews as the Sabbath day. For the followers of the "Old" Testament Saturday is the Sabbath-day as originally ordained by God. The Jews in fact observed it very strictly: "in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou" (Deut 5:14). Jesus had in mind this factor when he said: "Pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on the Sabbath day" (MT 24:20). During his own life-time Jesus followed the Sabbath day "as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (LK 4:16). However, he did not believe in just ritual observance of the day: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (MK 2:27). He worked some of his healing miracles on Sabbath days and when the Jews objected to this he told them: "It is therefore permitted to do good on the Sabbath" (MT 12:12).

Jesus's disciples observed the Sabbath in the same manner. Even after his "crucifixion", "the women who had accompanied from Galilee...went home...and on the Sabbath they rested

KEEP IT MOVABLE

The Easter week-end has set in with its customary severity And that is odd because this year it comes towards the end of the possible dates for Easter The British expect biting winds, and the cherry wearing white (and they mean snow rather than blossom) for Eastertide. But they feel hard done by when it arrives so late in April. A fixed Easter would make life tidier, and easier for schools, shops, and the organising classes. But it would spoil the glory of this movable feast, which is unpredictable, except that those who prepare for dirty weather are seldom disappointed. The date of Easter is one of the oldest and most gnawed bones of contention in the calendar The entire Roman province of Asia was excommunicated for several centuries for heresy over the date; and England was split by schism for a century. It is safer not to meddle with the business.

Easter is the principal festival of the Christian year, and is second oldest observance after Sunday, which was regarded as the weekly celebration of the resurrection. In the same way that Christmas took over the pagan festival for the turn of the year and the sowing of crops, Easter, which has little to do with calendrical precision, took over the Jewish Passover. In the northern hemisphere the symbolism of rebirth after the winter works. The name of Easter is derived from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess, Eastre. (The days of the Christian week are also atavistically pagan). In the southern hemisphere, where Easter comes at the fall of the year, the dating of Easter is less apt.

The rules for the date of Easter are majestic in their complexity. In the west, Easter falls on the first Sunday after the full moon that marks the vernal equinox. If that full moon occurs on a Sunday, Easter day is the Sunday after. In the revolutions of the wandering moon, this means that Easter can come at any time between March 22 and April 25, inclusive. The tables for working out the date, with golden numbers and dominical letters, are the most closely argued in The Book of Common Prayer, with division by 19, omissions of fractions and the number 6, division by 7, and all carried on by arithmetical theologians until the year 2199.

After the ferocious early schisms and ex-communications, for the last thousand years the western churches have settled on keeping Easter on the same day according to the nice arithmetical rules they have worked out. The Orthodox churches follow a slightly different calculation, with the result that Orthodox Easter, although sometimes coinciding with that of the west, can fall one, four or five weeks later. In this century there has been some discussion of the advantages of a fixed Easter for example on the first Sunday in April. There is no insuperable theological objection to such a change. But it would depend on agreement being reached among the various churches. To judge from the history of this thorny red-letter day in the calendar, such agreement is improbable.

Easter is the great Christian festival, even though it is increasingly exploited by commerce for the exchange of chocolate eggs and trumpery trinkets. Christ is risen. Spring has arrived a little late this year. Easter's date should be left to the churches, in their infinite capacity for pleasant pedantry. For there is virtue in this movable feast. What needs moving is the British fixation on its other bank holidays concentrated in the spring and early summer, and the whole nation turned out with nothing better to do than sit in tailbacks on fuming motorways.

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in obedience to the commandment"(LK 23:55,56). Paul also continued the same custom of teaching in the synagogues on Sabbath days(Acts 17:1,2 18:4). The Sabbath was changed from Saturday to SUN-day to appease emperor Constantine who was a SUN-worshipper. It was in 336 C.E. at the Council of Laodicia that it was formally decided to change the Sabbath to Sunday, being the day on which Jesus rose. Thus Sunday celebrates the Lord's Day. In fact the Church adopted the pagan Roman nomenclature for the days of the week as well as months.

We can thus understand how paganism has gradually overtaken Christianity which did not start as a separate religion nor even as a separate sect of Judaism.

EASTER

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica(11th Edition, vol.viii, pp 828-829): "There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passovers with a new conception added to it, of Christ as the true Paschal lamb and the first fruit from the dead, continued to be observed".

"Although the observance of Easter was, at a very early period in the practice of the Christian Church, a serious difference as to the day for its observance soon arose between the Christians of Jewish origin and those of the Gentile descent, which led to a long and bitter controversy. With the Jewish Christians the fast ended on the 14th day of the moon at evening without regard to the day of the week. The Gentile Christians on the other hand identified the first day of the week with the resurrection, and kept the preceding Friday as the commemoration of the crucifixion, irrespective of the day of the month.

"Polycarp, the disciple of John the evangelist, and Bishop of Smyrna, visited Rome in 159 C.E. to confer with Anicetus the bishop of that See on the subject, and urged the tradition which he had received from the apostles of observing the 14th day. Anicetus, however, declined. About forty years later the question was discussed in a very different spirit between Victor bishop of Rome, and Polycrates, metropolitan of proconsular Asia. That province was the only portion of Christendom which still adhered to the Jewish usage. Victor demanded that all should adopt the usage prevailing in Rome. This Polycrates firmly refused to agree to, and urged many weighty reasons to the contrary, whereupon Victor proceeded to excommunicate Polycrates and the Christians who continued the Eastern usage. He was, however, restrained from actually proceeding to enforce the decree of excommunication and the Asiatic churches retained their usage unmolested. We find the Jewish usage from time to time reasserting itself after this, but it never prevailed to any large extent.

"A final settlement of the dispute was one among the other reasons which led Constantine to summon the council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. At that time the Syrians and Antiochenes were the solitary champions of the observance of the 14th day. The decision of the Council was unanimous that Easter was to be kept on Sunday, and on the same Sunday throughout the world, and that none hereafter should follow the blindness of the Jews". The few who afterwards separated themselves from the unity of the church and continued to keep the 14th day were named 'Quatro-decimani', and the dispute itself is known as 'Quatro-deciman controversy."

Easter was one of the compromises Athanasius, delegate of the African(Alexandrian) Church had to make to win over support for his doctrine of Trinity. In his 'Festival Letter' in 331 C.E. he enjoined upon his flock to observe Easter on the Roman style.

The Jews used the old Babylonian lunar calendar as did the Greeks. The Lunar calendar does not follow the seasonal patterns. The Gentiles who were used to celebrating their festivals mostly on fixed dates in the solar calendar found it difficult to follow the lunar system. Easter is an example of a floating holiday following on a certain lunar date in a certain solar period. It conveniently coincided with the spring festival.

Originally, the Jewish Christians celebrated Pascha, or Passover, nevertheless with "Christian" overtones. When the festival was paganised it became Easter. No wonder because it was now an adaptation of a pagan rite dedicated to the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian goddess *ISHTAR*. In the old Teutonic mythology she is also known as *Ostern*. The Phoenicians called her *Astarte*, consort of *Ba'al*, the sun-god.

Interestingly, many present day Christians celebrate Easter by decorating eggs which is considered a symbol of resurrection. This practice is also borrowed from pagan sources, many ancient civilizations considered eggs as sacred, as a symbol of promise of life. In the Egyptian religious ceremonies eggs formed an integral part. In the Chinese mythologies eggs have a special place. The ancient Druids of England bore an egg as the sacred emblem of their idolatrous order. The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the *Venus Ishtar*, fell from heaven to the *Euphrates*. Eggs have played an important role in the ceremonies honouring *Ishtar* of the pagans. They still do marking the ceremonies of Easter of the Christians!

With the adoption of Easter came "Sunrise Services" on Easter Sunday a reminiscence of pagan sun-worshippers standing facing east towards the rising sun, stretching their hands outwards making thereby the cross of the Sun-god, a worship that honoured the Sun-god and his mythical idolatrous consort, the goddess *Ishtar*!

LENT

The English poet Shelley wrote: "If winter comes can spring be far behind?" With the adoption of Easter, the natural corollary was the adoption of Lent as well. The Lentern season is a period of 40 days of abstinence, beginning on Ash Wednesday and ending with Easter Sunday.

The word lent is derived from the Old English word *lancten* meaning the "spring". The pagans kept "fasts, many of which lasted from seven to forty-two days, and sometimes even a longer period" (Wilkinson: Egyptian Antiquities, Chapt. III). The original length of this period of fasting and/or celebration in the ancient Babylon was 'forty days' (Layard: Nineveh and Babylon).

Lent, in different names in different cultures, was an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival for "resurrection" of the earth out of the death of winter. The Babylonians celebrated it to mark the death and resurrection of *Tammuz* their Messiah (death and resurrection of Jesus a familiar coincidence!). The Babylonian lunar month falling in June/July was named in honour of *Tammuz* and "forty days" of Lent preceded the feast of *Tammuz*. *Ezekel* (8:13-14) describes it vividly.

When the early church adopted this celebration it called it "tessarakaste" in Greek, or "quadragessina" in Latin. The two words mean the same thing "count 40". The Gentile Christians adapted the custom in their own environment in different countries with the result that the length differed from place to place and church to church.

Iranaeus bishop of Gaul (now France) in his letter to the bishop of Rome in the second century C.E. wrote: The controversy is not only concerning the day (Easter), but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more, and some forty. This diversity in observance has not originated in our time, but long

before in that of our ancestors a custom.... according to private fancy"(Eusebius: Church History).

BAPTISM

Did John really baptise Jesus(MK 1, MT 3, LK 3)? Did Jesus himself perform baptism? Unfortunately we cannot for sure say "yes". Some critics believe that, like Eucharist, this rite too was taken over from Graeco-Oriental initiation rites. In the Roman ritual of TAUROBOLIUM the worshiper stood in a pit and was bathed in the blood of a bull sacrificed over him. He emerged from this rite in a state of purified innocence. In order to counter criticism the Christian 'saints' put forward the view that the Devil had foreseen the ritual and made his followers to perform it and this was done long before Christianity in order to discredit Christianity. Justine Martyr as well as Tertullian wrote: "We recognize here also the zeal of the devil rivalling the things of God, while we find him, too, practicing baptism in his subjects. What similarity is there? The unclean cleanses, the ruiner sets free, the damned absolves, he will forsooth, destroy his own work, by washing away the sin which he himself inspires!(Tertullian; de baptismo 5).

John the Baptist is stated to have said: "I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost"(MK 1:8) seems to indicate that Jesus was not to baptize with water. This is further reinforced by the statement in Acts(1:5): "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost".

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,(though Jesus' himself baptized not, but his disciples)"(JN 4: 1-2) could imply that while Jesus' disciples were baptizing, he himself was not doing so. Jesus' command(known as the Great Commission): go ye into all the World, and preach the gospel to every creature. he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved(MK 16:15-16) is now almost universally accepted to be a later addition/interpolation and reflects later church practice.

At Pentecost Peter is reported to have preached "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"(Acts 2:38). This would be in contrast to Jesus' promise of baptism with the Holy Ghost! Peter's use of Christ is a reflection of Pauline church and Luke introduces this entirely new institution rather suddenly without any precedent of Jesus having said so during his lifetime. Interestingly even the original Pauline baptism seems to have been in the name of Jesus Christ, as above, or "in the name of the Lord Jesus", (Acts 8:16, 10:48, 19:5), unto Christ(Rom 6:3, Gal 3:27), etc. The Catholic Baptism into "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" is a later invention after adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine. Interestingly, a later scribe interpolating in the text of Acts(8:16) has clarified that people were being baptized "in the name of Lord Jesus" because "as yet he [the Holy Ghost] was fallen upon none of them". Even the author of the Acts records that [Peter] "Commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord"(19:48). Presently, there are controversies within the Christian sects whether baptism is required, and if so whether at adulthood or at birth, whether by immersion or by anointing of head, etc.

Incidentally the Council of Trent anathematizes those who would say that the Christian baptism is the same as that of John the Baptist. This makes Jesus' own baptism at the hand of John void and useless.

"As to the Gentiles that were converted to the belief of the Messiah, tho' Paul were the Apostle of the uncircumcision and did not reduce them under the Mosaical Law and Rites, yet being originally an Hebrew it is easy to be observed that in the settling of the Church

government, and the penalty of excommunication, he did introduce in their Church several Judaical constitutions, accommodating thereto divers of the Pagan ceremonies. The intromission of the Gentiles by Baptism was no Jewish Rite in Proselytes of the uncircumcision, and can only be looked on as a particular washing from uncleanness, such as was that of John Baptism; or an imitation of that Pagan Rite so frequently used in case of enormous sins to wash them away by bathing in a river, to which the poet alludes:

Ah nimium faciles qui tristia Crimina Caedis,

Fluminea tolli posse putastis Aqua(Ov. Fast. 1.2).

It is most certain that Baptism heretofore was not administered by aspersion(as now), but by a total immersion; and as to the baptising of children, if it were used by any in the first stages, it is condemned by Tertullian, and others, and can vouch no precedents or precepts out of Scripture, the discontinued usage of baptising for dead, hath more to shew for it, since it is mentioned in scripture, and not condemned in the Greek Church. Nazianzen was not baptised till thirty-three years old, albeit a Bishop's son, nor was Valentinian the Emperor Theodosius(altho' descended of Christian Parents), nor St. Ambrose, nor Constantine, and his son Constantius; so that we need not wonder to read that sundry heretical Christians did reject Baptism totally, perhaps it having never been used in their Churches. Such were the Selcucini, Hermiani, Precliani, and that ancient and numerous sect of the Manichees; even the Jacobites did not use Baptism, but with a hot iron imprinted the sign of the Cross in the Forehead of their Partisans.

"If I may be allowed to guess at the original of Baptism, I would derive it from the Pagan custom aforesaid of washing away expiatorily in rivers the most enormous sins, in the doing whereof the Pagans were very tender, but the Christians merely frank(as Zosimus relates of Constantine the great), and the Baptism of children from hence that because the Romans used the eighth and ninth day to devote their infants to Dea Nundina, and give them names, as the Greeks did to theirs, on the tenth day after their birth, therefore the Christians out of compliance with the Superstition of the Vulgar did hereby incline them at these times to initiate their children to Christ"(Henry Stubbe: op. cit)

EUCCHARIST

The ceremony of eating bread and drinking wine as a ritual of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, is a symbolic ritual for being one with Christ so "he that eateth me, even he shall live by me"(JN 6:57). In fact all the four Gospel mention this. The synoptic Gospels mention it as having been said at the Last Supper(MK 14:22-25; MT 26:26-28; LK 22:17-19) while according to John this was said much earlier in Capernaum(6:52-58).

There are serious doubts if this ceremony indeed originated with Jesus. Had it been so the source of such a knowledge would have been one of the Twelve from whom Paul ought to have received it. Yet Paul boasts: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat. this is my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. After the same manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me"(I Cor 11:23-27).

All this smacks of pagan rites. In Graeco-Oriental cultures sacred meals in honour of some divinity were very common and played a distinct part in the initiation rites of the cults. Mithraic rites required the initiate to eat honey, and drink sacred potion of meal and water and eat the food from the chest. In the Dionysaic orgy the devotees would tear the living animal apart and ate the bloody flesh where the sacrificial animal represented the god

himself. Other cults also practiced such rites. In many ancient cultures, indeed, the king was ritually sacrificed after a stipulated period of time. The ritualised killing of the king is one of the most archaic and widespread rites of early civilised man. The sacrificed king's body became the object of a feast. His flesh was eaten and his blood was drunk. Thus did the subjects ingest and incorporate into themselves something of their dead ruler's virtue and power. A residue of this tradition is obvious enough in the Christian Communion Service. Paul found it fit to install this because of its familiarity to the Gentiles of pagan origin.

However, it is pointed out that this sacrament was being practiced by the original disciples of Jesus long before Paul came into picture: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart"(Acts 2:46). In this regard it may be stated that there is little reason to doubt the partaking of a common meal by the followers of Jesus but this need not necessarily be in commemoration of the departed Lord. Whenever these followers met for a common meal their intimate ties with Jesus must have been recalled and, if indeed there was a "Last Supper", they must have fondly remembered how Jesus had talked with them on the occasion, but there is no evidence that this was intended to commemorate Jesus' death. We must also note that the account of such meetings as it appears in the Acts is written by none other than Luke, the constant companion of Paul.

That some of the early church fathers did not favour this sacrament in its present form is indicated in writings of Justin Martyr: "Which the wicked demons have initiated in the mysteries of Mithra, commanding the same things to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn"(Apoli 66,4). This raises the doubt if in fact even Paul meant this sacrament to be installed as a rite. The manner in which Mark or Matthew record Jesus' statement and as also reflected in Luke makes some critics to wonder if the extra material in Luke "which is given for you: thus do in remembrance of me. Likewise also this cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is died for you"(LK 19:20) is an interpolation after the time of Justin Martyr when this rite(sacrament of Eucharist) was being strongly debated, or rather denounced. It is pertinent to point that this interpolated text does not appear in Peshitta(Syriac) version and particularly underlines the interpolated nature of the spurious text.

"The like Condescention was used in many other cases, as in the observation of Christmas, New Year's day, May day, Shrovetide, and the previgil and weeks of Saints; and the form of Churches, the praying to the East, processions about Parish bounds, the Denomination of the Clergy by the titles of Antistites, Pontifices, Sacerdotes, and the Churches by the name of Temple and Ades, the shaving of the Clergy, the Surplice, the Antiphons, and a thousand other things observable in the ancient Gentile, Christianity had no other original. Even the Sacrament of the Lord's supper and all its rites seem to be deduced hence, the festivals of the Pagan deities were usually suppers at which there was great feasting, in both which this sacrament did at first resemble them. They were performed in Temples, so was this at first, and so still continues to be. All the names of the Pagan misteries are fixed on this sacrament, and its rites; and the procedure from Chatechumeni to Competentes, and then to Fideles: the preparation before it, and the Austerities, so resembling that they easily shew whence they were derived. But withal I must add that as these misteries were not everywhere the same(for in the mysteries of Mithras they gave to the initiated a cup of water and some bread with some accessional forms of words), so neither were the rites of this Christian Sacrament in all places like. Where the Reverence of the Mysteries were greatest and most solemn and accompanied with greater mortifications, there the Christians were more strict; where it seemed rather

substituted to the Pagan festival suppers, there they were more jocund, and the 'xupia xovopooxn' was no other among the Christians than these suppers, paganical setva or Pontificum Caenae of the Gentiles. In some places they had their assemblies of men at Festivals, these were allowed everywhere in Greece and Alexandria, and usual among the Gentiles, and those which assembled there were either held upon a religious account or merely for pleasure and conversation as the rest. At these feasts each person contributed his part or share towards the defraying the expense, which contribution was called Symbola, or Symbolum: and usually either the overplus of the money collected for these meetings was laid up, or perhaps some further collection made for the relief of needy or distressed members of the society or against such Contingencies. This seems apparent from the Communion of the Corinthians, where every man brought in his contribution of food and wine, and ate and drank thereof. The fault which the Apostle doth blame in them is that the Communicants did not impart to the rest of the fraternity that which they brought, but each fed upon his own Symbolum, so that the poorer sort did rise hungry and the rich did eat and drink to excess. He tells the Corinthians that if they will eat apart, they may do it at home, and not in the Church or public assembly: that this procedure was contrary to the rules and intent of such Feasts, and that thereby such as were poor were put to shame and slighted, by reason of the meanness of their contributions(I Cor. 11:23)... Even in the Apostle's time some communicated with the Pagans at their festivals, and to the honor of Christ did drink of the cup of Devils, and did partake of the table of Devils(I Cor. 10:20-21), from whence we may observe that the rites were the same, tho' they differed in the objects of their devotion"(Henry Stubbe:op. dit.).

STATUES IN THE CHURCHES

As Christianity developed and assimilated other cultures there seemed nothing wrong in adapting some of the local traditions. This way the new converts felt at home with their new religion. It is in this manner that the early Catholic Church adopted statues of Jesus, Mary, the saints and the angels even though the commandments specifically stated: "you shall not make yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them"(Deut 5:8). "Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord"(Deut 27:15). In spite of such clear commandments the Second Council of Nicaea held in 787 C.E. allowed the placement of images in churches for veneration and not worship. The statues and images of Jesus do not depict him as a Jew but more as a Nordic blue-eyed blond!

"It is asserted in the book of Acts(19:26) that the Ephesians complained that "this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands". Paul said of godless people and his opponents: "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptable God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things"(Rom 1:22-23). This now aptly applied to his own followers. Christianity has been successively paganised!

THE CHRISTIAN PRAYER

"And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciple said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, when ye pray, say"(LK1:1-2). After this manner therefore pray ye(MT6:9). This is the only mention in the New Testament of Jesus teaching his disciples about how to pray. Both the Gospels quote only the words which are known as 'the Lord's Prayer' but not the manner of

Jesus' prayer. We do, However, in the following verses get a glimpse of how Jesus himself used to pray:

"And he went a little further and fell on his face and prayed"(MK 14:35; MT 26:39).

"He himself withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and began to pray"(LK 22:41).

Disregarding the discrepancy between the two different narrations about the same event, we understand that in his prayers Jesus used to **kneel down or fall on his face also**.

From the Old Testament books we learn how the patriarchs used to pray:

"And Abraham fell on his face.."(Gen 17:3,17).

"And the man [Abraham's son] bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord(Gen 24:26).

"And they [Moses and Aaron] fell upon their faces"(Num 20:6).

"And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped"(Ex 34:8)

"And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat; when they went into the tent of the congregation... they washed as the Lord commanded Moses"(Ex 40:31-32).

"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship"(Josh 5:14).

"Gideon fell to his knees and worshiped God"(Jdg 7:15).

"When Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven"(I Kg 8:54).

"Elijah bowed to the ground and prayed"(I Kg 18:42).

"Now when Daniel ... went into his house, and his window being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime"(Dan 6:16).

"And Ezra blessed the Lord ... with their faces to the ground"(Neh 8:6).

How different is the Christian prayer from that of Abraham, Moses and the patriarchs and from Jesus himself! The present Christian manner has been adopted from the pagan worship, music and all. Today Christians of Africa are demanding the use of local drums in their prayers. If western musical instruments can be used during prayers, then why not African drums?

The various Christian churches have found it necessary to shape their dogmas with changing times [see Chapter XV]. Because of their weak theological position they have also to change their principles and practices to popular themes. In this vein the "contemporary" translation of the Lord's Prayer(Mathew's Version) in NTC (endorsed by the famous protestant evangelist Rev. Billy Graham) is illuminating:

Our Father in heaven,

Reveal who you are,

Set the world right;

Do what is best —

as above, so below.

Keep us alive with three square meals,

Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.

You are in charge!

You can do anything you want!

You are ablaze in beauty!

Yes, Yes, Yes.

Paul had paganized Jesus' message. His followers are now trying to modernise it according to their whims. While billions of people in the poor Third World countries are having difficulty trying to make two square meals, the Christian West seeks "Three Square Meals"!

UNCLEAN FOODS

Jews were very particular in their food habits. They abhorred pork. They slaughtered their animals in a particular way. "Ye shall not eat the blood. ye shall pour it upon the earth as water"(Deut 12:16). They meticulously washed their hands before eating meals. When the pharisees found that some of Jesus' disciples were eating with unclean hands, they objected (MT 15:2). The Apostles at Jerusalem relaxed certain rules but insisted: "you are to abstain from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled" (Acts 15:29). It is not specified that pork was or was not to be eaten. It was understood that no clarification was needed. There were statutes regarding clean and unclean food; even consideration of consumption of unclean foods was simply out of question.

"The Gentile world to which Paul preached was already steeped in sacramentalism and familiar with the idea of a god who died and rose again. The temples where these rites were held and these ceremonial meals partaken of were cafes, and in Corinth, as in Paris today, friends are entertained to dinner at a restaurant rather than at home; as there was nowhere else to go, Christians were placed in a difficult position. Paul at first tells the Corinthians not to go to these places at all, but afterwards changes his mind, for such a course of action would mean coming out of the world altogether, telling them to go if they want to, and eat everything placed before them, asking no questions about what had been done with the meat before it came to the table, unless they were challenged. The Christian housewife was also in a difficulty. To preserve it from contagion by evil spirits, the meat exposed for sale in the market had been consecrated to one of these gods, and so from her point of view would be tainted. Again Paul says that she is not to ask questions, and buy freely, unless she was challenged"(G.H. Davies, et. al., ed.: Twentieth Century Bible Commentary)

When Paul declared that law with all its rules and regulations had been annulled (Rom 7:6, 10:4; Eph 2:5; Col 2:4), he opened the flood gates. Paul commanded: "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake"(1 Cor 10:25). "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no questions for conscience sake"(1 Cor 10:27). "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of any holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath day"(Col 2:16). In one stroke he obliterated what the Jews had treasured as sacred and binding. What was considered unclean before now became clean so that the pagan Gentiles could now continue with their own customs!

The Paulines took advantage of Jesus' saying: "Not that which cometh into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man"(MK 7:15; MT 15:11). Of course he was not talking literally. [Literally it would have meant that "vomit defiles"]. This did provide the opportunity to twist the words to the advantage of Gentile converts to "Christianity" who could now continue with their pagan food habits rather than change over to strict Jewish food laws followed by Jesus himself. It is stated that this was also according to what was revealed to Peter at Joppa in a dream: "And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to earth: wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and

creeping things, and fowl of the earth. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, Kill, and eat. But Peter said Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not the common"(Acts 10:11-15).

What was really meant by this dream, if there was indeed such an experience by Peter? Did this really mean that Peter was exhorted to kill and eat all kinds of "four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things and fowl of the earth?" [No SEA FOODS?] Were the Christians now allowed to eat swine, dogs, mice, lizards, bats and the like [but NO SEAFOOD]? It means Peter too "thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee"(Acts 10:19). These three men took Peter to Cornelius, "a certain man in Caesarea, a centurion of the band called the Italian band"(Acts 10:19). Peter told Cornelius and his friends that were gathered there that "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is Jew to keep company, or come unto one another nation, but God hath showed me that I should not call any man uncommon or unclean"(Acts 10:28). Thus the obvious interpretation to Peter's dream was: "Go and preach to the Gentiles" and not "Go and eat the food of the Gentiles". This would be extension of Jesus' promise to him and his brother Andrew: "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"(MT 4:19) and Jesus' posthumous, pre-ascension, direction to Peter to "Feed my lambs . . . sheep"(JN 2:15-17), and to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature(MK 16:5). However, in view of these prior instructions having been given by none other than Jesus himself, Peter did not have to protest to similar instructions by the Spirit(Acts 10:14) and then doubting the meaning of his dream(Acts 10:17).

Interestingly Peter seems to have retracted from the practice of preaching to and eating with the Gentiles. According to Paul "when Peter came to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself . . . Barnabas also was carried away with their dissemination"(Gal 2:11-13). Even so there is no evidence in the New Testament that Peter ate Pork or other foods considered common or unclean by the Jews. Thus eating of unclean foods has no biblical or apostolic sanction. Yet Christians eat pigs.

CELIBACY

The practice of celibacy and of vestal virgins have their roots in pagan cultures. Even if Jesus himself may not have married but he also did not oppose marriage. He talked of brides and bridegrooms and of innocent children. To him bonds of marriage were eternal and divorce unthinkable. If he is quoted correctly, he said: "A man who divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery"(MK 16:18). "What God has joined together, man must not separate"(MK 10:9). In his letter to the Corinthians Paul advised. It is better to marry than to burn ..."It is good for a man not to touch a woman, Nevertheless, to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife and every woman her own husband. If he has decided in his own mind to preserve his partner in her virginity, he will do well, and he who does not, will do better"(I Cor 7:1-2,9,36-38).

Paul considered that "those who marry will have pain and grief in his bodily life"(I Cor 7:28). Early saints considered sex as a weakness of the flesh and tried to avoid it. Origen, literally following Jesus' saying "there are eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it"(MT 19:12), emasculated himself through self-mutilation. This was an

extreme step and perhaps having realized rather too late, was later to say: "true purity does not consist in doing violence to the body but in mortifying the senses for the kingdom of God".

There was no celibacy in the early church. In actual fact even polygamy was accepted and practiced among Christians. The popes themselves married and some had their share of concubines and much more. In the fourth century C.E. Pope Demas put in place a liturgical law regarding abstinence from intercourse before celebration of the Eucharist [perhaps rightly so since Christianity has no laws regarding the state of cleanliness of the body while in church]. By the end of the fourth century C.E. Pope Siricus asked all priests to be celibate, but did not enforce the law. As the church became rich it was feared that priests will misappropriate church property for the benefit of their families. On the pretext of being a sign of dedication to priesthood Pope St. Gregory VII (1073 -1085 C.E.) enforced the law of celibacy. Since then all the priests, monks and nuns have been required to remain unmarried. Incidentally, during the middle ages the nuns were admitted to the convents as "brides of Christ" bringing large dowries with them which became the property of the church. Violation of many nuns by the priests and the sex scandals of some of the Popes is yet another matter.

POLYGAMY

It is notable that most of the Old Testament Prophets were polygamous. According to the Old Testament, Abraham "the friend of God" had more than one wife, David had one hundred wives, and Solomon is said to have had 700 wives and 300 concubines. If polygamy is immoral per se, then these and other leading figures in the Biblical traditions are immoral. In this case, there would be no sanctity attached to the Bible, its Prophets, or their teachings! No sincere Jew, Christian, or Muslim would regard God's chosen Messengers as immoral persons in spite of Paul's wholesale condemnation that "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23).

According to the Dictionary of the Bible (James Hastings, ed., Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1963, pp.624): "Polygamy meets us as a fact: e.g. Abraham, Jacob, the Judges, David, Solomon... In Deuteronomy 17:17, the King is warned not to multiply wives". The philosophy behind the legalization of polygamy is explained in the Encyclopedia Biblica: (T.K. Cheyene & J.S. Black, ed., The Macmillan Co. London 1902, vol 3, pp. 2946): "The man who owns his wife as a chattel can on the same principle own as many as he pleases that is to say, as many as he can afford to buy and keep... The Talmudists formulate the rule that no Jew may have more than four wives, kings may have at most eighteen".

According to Westermarck (The History of Human Marriage: The Macmillan Co., London 1925, vol 3, pp 42-43): "Among European Jews polygyny was still practiced during the Middle ages, and among Jews living in Muhammadan countries it occurs even to this day. An express prohibition of it was not pronounced until the convening of the Rabbinical Synod at Worms, in the beginning of the eleventh century. This prohibition was originally made for the Jews living in Germany and Northern France, but it was successively adopted in all European countries. Nevertheless, the Jewish Marriage Code retained many provisions which originated at a time when polygyny was still legally in existence".

As the Old Testament is vital part of the Christian faith, it cannot be disregarded in this discussion. It was concerning the Old Testament laws and the Old Testament Prophets that Jesus said plainly that he came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets but rather to fulfill. In addition, there is no passage in the New Testament that clearly prohibits polygamy. This was the understanding of the early Church Fathers and during several centuries in the Christian era.

"Considering that monogamy prevailed as the only legitimate form of marriage in Greece and Rome, it cannot be said that Christianity introduced obligatory monogamy in the Western World. Indeed, although the New Testament assumes monogamy as the normal or ideal form of marriage, it does not expressly prohibit polygyny, except in the case of a bishop and a deacon. It has been argued that it was not necessary for the first Christian teachers to condemn polygyny because monogamy was the universal rule among peoples in whose midst it was preached; but this is certainly not true of the Jews, who still both permitted and practised polygyny at the beginning of the Christian era"(Westernarck,op.cit.).

Some of the early Fathers accused the Jewish Rabbis of sensuality, but no Council of the Church in the earliest centuries opposed polygyny, and no obstacle was put in the way of its practice by kings in countries where it had occurred in the times of paganism. In the middle of the sixth century Diarmait, King of Ireland, had two queens and two concubines. Polygyny was frequently practiced by the Merovingian kings. Charles the Great had two wives and many concubines; and one of his laws seems to imply that polygyny was not unknown even among priests. In later times Philip of Hesse and Frederick William II of Prussia contracted bigamous marriages with the sanction of the Lutheran clergy. Luther himself approved of the bigamy of the former, and so did Melancthon. On various occasions Luther speaks of polygyny with considerable toleration. It had not been forbidden by God; even Abraham, who was a "perfect Christian," had three wives. It is true that God had allowed such marriages to certain men of the Old Testament only in particular circumstances, and if a Christian wanted to follow their example he had to show that the circumstances were similar in his case; but polygyny was undoubtedly preferable to divorce. In 1650, soon after the Peace of Westphalia, when the male population had been greatly reduced by the Thirty Years' War, the Frankish Kreistag at Nuremberg passed the resolution that thenceforth every man should be allowed to marry two women. Certain sects of Christians have even advocated polygyny with much fervor. In 1531 the Anabaptists openly preached at Munster that he who wants to be a true Christian must have several wives. And the Mormons, as all the world knows, regarded polygyny as a divine institution. The Mormon Church accepted the principal of Plural Marriage as a revelation from God. It was widely practiced after Brigham Young led the Mormons toward their "Promised Land" the Territory of Utah, in 1847. In 1890, however, after polygamy was outlawed by a Federal Statute, Church funds and property were confiscated [Freedom of Religion?]. This apparently led the Church to issue a manifesto banning plural marriage. Church president Wilford Woodruff later declared that the manifesto had been "divinely inspired". It is estimated that in the State of Utah(U.S.A) alone over 30,000 middle-class Mormon Americans still cling to the practice of plural marriages sometimes marrying two(or more) sisters(see Ben Benson: Husbands With More Than One Wives, JOURNAL, June 1967, esp. pp.78).

In a number of African countries most Churches "tolerate", actually allow, plural marriages. In fact there is no effective preaching against such marriages. In most Christian countries "Common law" marriages are quite prevalent many a time among "Church-going" believers.

Legal systems in Christian countries expressly forbid formal plural marriages even "by mutual consent of all concerned" so that even non-Christians, whose religions permit plural marriages, are not allowed to practice according to the tenets of their own religions. On the other hand extra-legal adultery, fornication, homo-sexuality, lesbianism, "by consent of participating adults" is no more looked down upon by the society at large. It seems the legal system believes that whatever their earthly considerations "God will judge the adulter and all the sexually immoral"(Heb 13:4) so why bother!

CONFESSION

As soon as the official church got involved itself in the worldly affairs it had to deal with issues of irreverence and sin which according to the church itself were a product of the carnal nature of man originating from the "original sin". If souls were to be saved only through faith in Christ as the only Saviour, righteousness was of secondary value. Since "everyone has sinned"(Rom 3:23) sin had to be accepted as an everyday happening. "After his resurrection when Jesus appeared to his disciples behind closed doors" he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained"(JN 20:22-23). Church now took on that authority on itself. Pope Ambrose during the reign of Theodosius declared that one could 'confess' his sin, and if necessary, perform a penance, and be absolved of it. Here was then another way by which the church could keep control of its flock and at the same time profit from it. Soon all types of sins were being "forgiven" on payment of designated sums. This was one of the practices against which Martin Luther revolted.

USURY

The law of Moses basically abhorred usury and strived to make lending less painful. It thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer: neither shalt thou lay upon him usury"(Ex 22:25). "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything, that is lent upon usury"(Deut 23:19). "No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge"(Deut 24:6) "When thou dost lend thy brother anything, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge. In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment(Deut 24:10-13). "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down. For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?"(Ex 22:26-27).

The Jewish treatment of non-Jews was, however, different "Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury: but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury"(Deut 23:20). So when the Jews scattered in Africa, Asia and Europe they felt no qualms in adopting usury against those "strangers". For centuries they were considered the "Shylocks" who were extracting the proverbial "pound of flesh".

The early Christian church clinged to the anti-usury practice. However, it was not much later that usury became accepted. Under the teaching of Adam Smith, the father of modern Economics, usury became the wages of money. John Calvin, who was a French lawyer and later became the originator of Calvinism, a Protestant sect, fully approved of taking interest as a modern phenomenon, "pound of flesh" notwithstanding. Usury is now the cornerstone of western(Christian) economics and a useful tool of exploitation of poorer classes and poorer nations.

BASIC CHRISTIAN FAITH

With more than two thousand five hundred sects, denominations, cults, etc., Christians have many different concepts of God and human salvation. Christianity in the last twenty centuries has consistently considered that whereas God created man in His own image, man must picture Him through his own genius. God of the Christian faithful is an evolving product of human wisdom and whims. This has been decided, by Aays and Nays, in a democratic manner, whatever that means in view of royal interferences, through Ecumenical Councils, Synods, Papal Bulls and even through imperial ordinances. With a large variety and vast diversity of views it is quite impossible to prepare a statement of "a common set of properties that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for being a Christian". Nevertheless it is possible to identify a Central Core of Doctrines that a substantial proportion of Christians believe and profess.

The cornerstone of Christianity was laid by Paul who declared: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3-4). The earliest statement of Christian faith is the APOSTLE'S CREED:

I believe in God the Father Almighty
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

It will be noticed that in this Creed the Holy Ghost has not yet been made a Co-equal Person in the three-Person-but-one-Person God-head although many would see in it what they would like to see interpreting it according to their own bias.

As Christianity came under imperial protection of the sun-worshiper Emperor (St.) Constantine it adopted the Nicene Creed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. However, a more polished version was formally adopted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. It is known as NICENO-CHALCEDONIAN CREED:

I believe in one God the Father Almighty
Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible:
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God;

begotten of his Father before all worlds,
 God of God,
 Light of Light,
 Very God of Very God;
 begotten, not made;
 being of one substance with the Father;
 by whom all things were made;
 who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,
 and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,
 and was made man:
 and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
 He suffered and was buried;
 and the third day he rose again according to Scriptures:
 and ascended into heaven,
 and sitteth on the right hand of the Father
 and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead;
 whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church:

I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins:

And I look for the Resurrection of the dead:

And the Life of the world to come.

Amen.

As usual the Niceno-Chalcedonian Creed did not end the controversies even within the Trinitarians themselves. If "Father" begot the "Son" through the "Spirit" then what was the relationship between them? The Western Church postulated that the Holy Spirit "proceeded from the Father and from the Son". Eastern Church insisted that it ("he", she?) proceeded from the Father through the Son". Everyone seems to have been inspired differently to reach their conclusion in visualizing the composition of the Unseen, Unvisualizable, God. The Western interpretation was formally adopted at the Council of Trent as the fundamental Symbol and embodied in the Profession of the Tridentine Faith by Pope Pius IV. Because of such problems of definition the Oriental churches have never fully naturalized this Creed. However, the Greek and the Orthodox churches use it without the Western interpretation (known as the FILIOQUE).

The ATHANASIAN CREED, the third important creed of Christianity, is as follows:

Whosoever earnestly desires to be saved must above all hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith unless every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish in eternity. And the Catholic Faith is this:

"That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Person: or dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated: and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one incomprehensible, and one uncreated. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not three Almighties: but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.

And yet there are not three Gods: but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord: For like as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, There be three Gods or three Lords. The Father is made of none: Neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, or created, or begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after another; one is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together: and coequal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He, therefore, who will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance of the Father begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world: perfect God and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood. Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two but one Christ; one, not by conversion, of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God; one altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ: who suffered for our salvation, descended into Hades, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God almighty: from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen."

The Christian faith, or rather the Trinitarian faith, as especially indicated in the Athanasian Creed is anchored in "One-is-Three and Three-in-One" incomprehensible brain-teaser. We shall, therefore, analyse various concepts as mentioned in these creeds in order to understand the Christian faith as far as it can be understood:

TRINITY: Jesus said "No man can serve two masters" (MT 6:24-34; LK 16:13). Yet most Christians, who call themselves "Trinitarians" would like us to serve not even two but three Gods: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. "One of the most difficult mysteries of God's being is the doctrine of the Trinity" (Harlow: Basic Bible Doctrines). "Although it is difficult to comprehend, it is nevertheless what the Bible tells us, and is the closest the finite mind can come to explaining the infinite mystery of the infinite God" (Josh McDowell and Don Stewart: Answers to Tough Questions, pp.71).

What is this ambiguous, difficult to explain and comprehend doctrine which is the very basis of the faith of most who profess Christianity? The Westminster Confession of Faith defines Trinity as: "In the Unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son". According to the authors of the "Answers to Tough Questions" what the Bible does teach is stated in the doctrine of the Trinity as: "there is one God who has revealed himself in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

and these three persons are the one God". However, Harlow (op cit) confirms that "the word Trinity does not occur in the Bible".

It is admitted by all Christians that there is one God and only one God. Even under the ambiguity of Trinity no one dare deny this. Old Testament repeatedly asserted this: "The Lord our God is one Lord (Deut 6:4). This is the first Commandment. Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts: I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me" (Isa 44:6). These words have been in the heart of every Jew ever since. They revered the Lord God so much that it was considered unpious to refer to Him by a personal name.

Even Paul affirmed that "there is one God" (1 Tim 2:5). In all his writings he has never equated Christ with God: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Col 1:3). "For though there be what are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as there be gods many and lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 8:5-6). Thus even Paul did not give Jesus the full honour of being God and, interestingly, he has little to say about the third person of the Holy Trinity, The Holy Ghost! The nearest he comes to mentioning these 'persons' together anywhere in his epistles is his benediction at the end of his second Corinthian Epistle: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and fellowship in the Holy Spirit" (13:14). Even here he invokes the love of 'God' as being distinctly different from the other so-called "persons" of the God-head. Had he any idea of Trinity he would not have made the distinction between "God" and Christ. James calls himself "a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ". No Holy Ghost!

The idea of Trinity is the outgrowth of Greek philosophy and mythology, solar myths of India and the Persians and the mysteries of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, Zagreus and Heracles. According to the Jewish sacred writings in Talmud there are three who are involved in the reproduction process: The Holy One, blessed He be, the father, and the mother. This had no connection with three persons of the Godhead. To the Jewish orthodoxy including Jesus' own disciples only a mad-man could conceive the incarnation of the spirit of God. When the Jewish messianic hope did not materialise the early Christians relegated this hope to the return of the Messiah who will do all the things expected of him. Under Paul's tutelage, the so-called Messianic passages were re-interpreted around the figure of Jesus, who was the Christ, and hidden meanings were unearthed. It was asserted that from times immemorial the Jews (and their prophets!) did not understand what was really meant in various passages in their own books. Even Jesus' disciples were said to have not grasped the full meaning of what Jesus had told them, even though Jesus told them: "To you the secret of the kingdom of God has been given but to those who are outside everything comes by way of parables" (MK 4:11, MK 4:34, Mt 13:3, 13:35). Yet they understood none of it (LK 8:34). Then Paul started maligning them in order to discredit their testimony. Saul the Jew turned into Paul the Roman and his teaching absorbed the Greek philosophy for the sake of the Gentiles to whom he became the Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13).

The Jews were strongly monotheistic. Early Christians had also believed in One God. The Gentiles were familiar with the concepts of Triune and Triad gods and also three Co-Emperors. They were also familiar with Plato's concept of soul, reason (logos) and spirit. Philo had talked about logos as the creative aspect of Yahweh. So there was no need to make three Co-Gods, they called Him One God-head who was one Person, yet three "Persons" made Him so. Each one sends yet another. Only one is to be prayed to, one delegates authority to others yet each has his own authority independent of others and they are equal although everything seems to emanate from the "Father". The first "Person" of the Trinity is the Creator and jealous avenger (destroyer); the second "Person" is the Saviour and Redeemer; the third "Person", which is himself (or, herself, as the "spirit" is associated with a feminine gender in Aramaic

and Hebrew) a gift, the bestower of (heavenly) light and life. They seem to have their own exclusive spheres of action: No one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, only the Father (MK 13:22). [Nothing about the Holy Ghost!]. God creates, Son redeems and the Spirit sustains. Neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit can create, Father requires sacrifice of the Son to be propitiated, Son prays to the Father, and Spirit guides. The functions are well defined and exclusive domain of each of the three "persons" of the one-person God-head.

Even though these "Persons" are coequal, yet Father seems to be most powerful: "Father is greater than I" (JN 14:28). Even the Son has to sit on the right hand of God [God who? if Jesus himself was God(the Son)!] and needs the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:33). None of the three alone is the Creator, the Redeemer and the Life-giver. The Christian formula in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, "cannot be re-stated as "in the name of the Holy Ghost, and the Son, and the Father". They are three "Persons" but have to be treated as one "Person" so that their actions are in unison. No one has yet been able to explain these anomalies.

When it is pointed out that no where in the Bible, the Old Testament or the New Testament alike, there is any direct reference to Trinity, the Trinitarians point to certain texts in the Old testament where God has been treated as a plural:

Gen(1:26): "Let us make man in our image".

Gen (3:22): "The Lord God said Behold the man is become as one of us."

Then the Lord God came down to Babel to confuse the language of the people.

(Gen 11:7): "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language"

(Gen 18): "When the Lord appeared to him (Abraham) in the plains of Mamre... he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood him... And they said unto him... and the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way .. And the Lord said, Because the cry in Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces thence .. And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham .. And there came two angels to Sodom .. and the men put forth their hand ... and they smote".

The whole text is confounding. The Lord God walks around like human beings, sometimes appearing as three men, sometimes talking as "the Lord" then turning into two angels who become "men". He has to visit Sodom and Gomorrah to check if things were really bad in these cities, etc. It is surprising that for centuries after the book of Genesis was written no one, not even Paul, realised anything unusual in the text until the Trinitarians discovered the plurality of the God-head. Conscious of the confusion surrounding the concept of Trinity St. Augustine pointed out that even human beings had body, soul and spirit in the image of the God-head.

According to the booklet "ISA(Jesus)" issued by Fellowship of ISA (Minneapolis, U.S.A.):

1. The universe consists of space, matter and time.

COMMENT: All these can be easily sub-divided. God is indivisible even according to the Trinitarians themselves. There was no universe before "the beginning;" there will be none after the "end". There are other aspect as well (see below).

2. Time is past, present or future.

COMMENT: There was no "past" when God created the heaven and the earth. Past is gone forever, future is absent and uncertain, we live only in the present, it is a continuum. No Part of the "God-head" should be so vague.

3. Water exists in three forms: ice, liquid or steam.

COMMENT: The same piece of mass exists only in one form at any one time. Water can also be broken down into Hydrogen and Oxygen. This has no relevance to God.

4. A man can be a father, a son, a husband.

A woman can be a mother, a daughter, a wife.

COMMENT: They can change in their shape as a child, an adolescent, young and old. Eventually all must die. One can at the same time be a friend, a carpenter, a consumer/customer. These are one's different roles as compared to the accepted Trinitarian belief where Father is in heaven and the Holy Ghost appears as a Dove to announce Father's relationship to the Son who was being baptised. These are not different roles of ONE person but of THREE different persons who cannot be ONE at the same time.

Other apologists have advanced similar arguments, such as:

1. The Earth has land, sea and air.

COMMENTS: But each is itself composed of a vast number of elements. "Father Son, and the Holy Ghost" are said to be one "Person" each hopefully indivisible any further.

2. Clouds have water vapour, electricity and sound.

COMMENT: Water vapours when condensed loose both the electricity and sound. God could not be in such an unstable state.

3. Trees have roots, trunks and branches.

COMMENT: They also have leaves. There are also other types of plant life.

4. A family consists of father, mother, and childrens.

COMMENT: How about "father, mother, sons and daughters" or just "parents and children"? In any case a family has many forms.

Let us remind these Trinitarian that nature has also been manifested in numbers other than three:

Positive :	Negative
Light :	Darkness
Wet :	Dry
True :	False
Rich :	Poor

Of the human body

Two eyes	One head, etc.
One nose (but two nostrils)	One liver
Two lungs	Two ears
Two hands (but ten fingers)	Two kidneys
Two feet (but ten toes)	One heart

These numbers can also be different for some individuals.

Also think of:

One father	One Devil/Satan
One mother	One Heaven
One God (the only One)	One Hell
One "Son" (?)	One Universe
One "Holy spirit" (?)	

But many angels, many stars, etc.

Such matters can be taken to their illogical end. Do we decide the nature of God, Unity or Trinity, on such hollow and absurd arguments?

If such arguments be tenable then we have a fourth person, Adam, who should be part of the Godhead! After all he too is a "son of God"(LK 3:38) After that we have to dispose of Eve in similar manner for she too had tasted of the tree of life. Why leave Enoch out of it for he too "walked with God"(Gen 5:22)? One will have to bring in Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and the additions will never end if we have to follow these myths. [In fact in the earlier times some African sects considered Trinity to be composed of "Father, Son, and the Holy Mother"].

Apologists contend that "Scriptures are quite specific as to naming God in terms of three persons". Yet all that is quoted are the words of mere humans saying "The Word was God"(JN 1:1), etc. According to Harlow(Basic Bible Doctrines) "Trinity is the only logical solution to seeming contradictions in the Bible". It is an admission to a confusion that gets more and more confounded as you analyse the situation. Instead of untangling the contradictions and confusions within the Bible, Trinity makes the matters more mysterious and unintelligible. Human mind may have its finite limits and God's mysteries may be infinite but does it mean that we should not use even our finite mind and accept what is obviously illogical and confounding? "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with east wind?"(Job 5:23).

The concept of 'Trinity' has been such a hard nut to crack that major schisms have arisen within the Christian church itself so that besides the Unitarian sects, there are many who believe in only two 'persons', the Father and the Son, and claim their inspiration from Paul's writings, whatever their merit. The Trinitarians, to prove their doctrine from the Bible itself, went to the extent of falsely inventing the infamous verse 1 John 5:7-8 which reads: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one". The actual verse in modern translations reads thus: "There are three witnesses, the spirit, the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement". Another forgery which was admirably detected by Sir Isaac Newton concerns manifestation of God in flesh, the very basis of Jesus' divinity. The verse(1 Tim 3:16) as it stands in KJV reads thus: "God was preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory". Sir Isaac detected that the word "O"("which") had been cleverly altered to "theos"(God). In spite of such efforts the doctrine of Trinity remains as ambiguous as ever even to those who place their faith in it.

HOLY SPIRIT And where does the Holy Spirit(Holy Ghost) come in? Is it merely a figure of speech or really a third 'person' and 'co-equal' with the other two 'persons' in the Holy Trinity? Then why is he (or is it she?) left out more often than not when the other two are mentioned?

Jesus was born by the power of this Holy Ghost(LK 1:35, also MT 1:20) which makes him the "child of the Holy Spirit"(MT(1:18). Yet he (or she) is not the Father! Jesus keeps calling God his 'Father' and never includes the Son or the Holy Spirit when he is praying. Paul talks of God and Lord, but does not include the Holy Spirit. Even in his benedictions he does not include the Holy Spirit, except once, a case which we have already disposed off. Paul identifies Christians as heirs of the Father and of Christ(Rom 8:17). Christ is called the head of man and "God" the head of all(1 Cor 11:3), ignoring the role of the Holy Spirit. Jesus the Christ stands(Acts 7:55,56) or sits(Col 3:1, Rev 5:1, 7:10) at the right hand(Rom 8:34) of God's throne but the real power of God, the Holy Spirit, is conspicuously missing. Yet it is the Spirit which raised Jesus to life again(Rom 8:11). Although the Holy Spirit is said to be the

"Advocate"(PARACLETE) that the 'Father' is supposed to send on the request of the 'Son'(JN 14:16) it is Jesus himself who will be the advocate with the Father(Jn 2:1). If God be spirit which is superior to flesh(JN 17,11, Rev 3:37) then the Spirit must be superior and not equal to the Son who is supposed to have incarnated into flesh and deficient in power which has to be given to him by "Father".

Jesus said "The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything(JN 14:26). The Spirit was thus to be in the shadow of the "Son". Its work will not be complete, just like that of the "Son" himself, so Jesus must return to finish the job. This may be because the Spirit was "not to speak of his own authority"(Jn 16:13-15) just as Jesus had the authority only which "God" delegated to him (often it is the authority of the "Father"). "Son" talks in parables only and is vague and not understood until he is gone. Then the Holy Spirit clears the air and opens the minds. No one can become a child of God or call Jesus Lord without the work of the Holy Spirit(I Cor 12:3). You cannot blaspheme against the Holy Spirit for it shall not be forgiven to you(MT 12:32).

According to John(7:39) the Spirit was to be given after Jesus was "glorified" (crucified), so the resurrected Jesus breathed on his disciples and said "receive the Holy Spirit"(JN 20:22). But according to Luke(Acts 2:4) the disciple received the Spirit not from Jesus himself but filled them at the time of Pentecost much later, after Jesus had already ascended to heaven. The phenomenon of the Spirit filling the people was not a new one. Spirit of God had filled Bezaleel, the son of Uri at the time of Moses, and he was also filled with wisdom, and understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship(Ex 31:3, 35:31). One of the early Judges, Othaniel, was also filled with the Spirit of God(Jdg 3:10) as was Samson(Jdg 14:6,9); it is another matter that Samson is also accused of hobnobbing with Delilah. Spirit of God also came upon Azariah the son of Obey(II Chr 15:1). Samuel the prophet told Saul that Spirit of God will come over him(Sam 10:6) and when it did he was also able to prophesy(Sam 10:10). Not only Saul but also his messengers had the Spirit of God(I Sam 19:20). Yet God was not with Saul but with David(I Sam 18:12), and even though "filled with the spirit of God" Saul became furious(I Sam 11:6) and also became naked before Samuel(I Sam 19:23-24). The Spirit of God also came upon Balaam(Num 24:2); actually God seems to have met Balaam(Num 23:4) before that. Yet Balaam was a priest to the Moabites. Zechariah, father of John the Baptist was filled with the Holy spirit(LK 1:37) as had been his wife Elizabeth(LK 1:41). No wonder John the Baptist himself was filled with the Holy spirit "even from his mother's womb"(LK 1:15). Thus the spirit had been filling people from olden times and no one gave it a thought that it was one of the three "persons" of the Holy Trinity — not even Paul!

The Holy Spirit seems to be elusive. "Seven Spirits of God" are mentioned in Rev(4:5). Even the "Son" has his own Spirit(II Cor 3:17,18). Not only that, "Lord is that Spirit"(II Cor 3:17). Again "God is a spirit"(JN 4:24). **CONFUSION ABOUND!**

Some of The Writings of The Early Fathers of Christianity about the Holy Spirit are summarised below:

- (a) Hermas (Similitude v. 5, 6) understands, by the "Holy Spirit," the divine element in Christ, namely the Son created before all things. Without entering into the useless or rather meaningless discussion whether Hermas confounds the Holy Spirit with the Word, or if it is a distinct element belonging to Christ, it is understood that the latter was created before all things — that is to say, in the beginning and that the Spirit in Hermas' belief is not a person.
- (b) Justin called the "Martyr"(100-167 ? C.E.) and Theophilus(120-180 ? C.E.) understood by the Holy Spirit sometimes a peculiar form of the manifestation of the Word and sometimes a divine attribute, but never a divine person.

It must be remembered that these two Greek fathers and writers of the second century C.E. had no definite knowledge and belief about the Holy Ghost of the Trinitarians of the fourth and the succeeding centuries.

- (c) Athenagoras(110-180 C.E.) says the Holy Spirit is an emanation of God proceeding from and returning to Him like the rays of the sun (Deprecatio pro Christianis, ix, x), Irenaeus(130-202 ? C.E.) says that the Holy Spirit and the Son are two servants of God and that the angels submit to them. The wide difference between the belief and the conceptions of these two early church fathers about the Holy Spirit is too obvious to need any further comment. It is surprising that the two servants of God, according to the declaration of such an authority as Irenaeus, should, two centuries afterwards, be raised to the dignity of God and proclaimed two divine persons in company with the one true God by whom they were created.
- (d) The most illustrious and learned of all the ante-Nicene fathers and the Christian apologists was Origen(185-254 C.E.). The author of the Hexpla ascribes personality to the Holy Spirit, but makes it a creature of the Son. The creation of the Holy Spirit by the Son cannot be even in the beginning when the Word or the Son was created by God.

The doctrine concerning this Holy Spirit was not sufficiently developed in 325 C.E., and therefore was not defined by the Council of Nicæa. It was only in 386 C.E. at the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople that it was declared to be the Third Person of the Trinity, consubstantial and coeval with the Father and the Son. It was not until 451 C.E. that it was included in the expanded Niceo-Chalcedonian Creed and until 599 C.E. that the Western Church finalized the FILIOQUE.

CONFUSION OVER "GOD"

The concept of Trinity and its three-yet-one "persons" has generated a lot of confusion and controversy ever since the term was invented and yet remains most ambiguous apparently even to its own proponents. If Jesus sits on the right hand of "God" then this means that Jesus is not God. If God here means Trinity of God-head then Jesus does not have to sit on its (His, Her) right or left. If "God" here means "Father", then where does the Holy Spirit sit?. If "Father", sits in the middle and other two "persons" sit on his right and left then is the "Father" superior to the other two "persons"? This is only one incidence. More confusion occurs and is further confounded if we give Trinitarian meanings to the word "God" as used in the Bible.

The very first Commandment, as stated by Jesus himself, says: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord"(MK 12:29). This is the same as in Deut(6:4). The Jews were always strongly Monotheists and never assigned any partners, or co-equals to "God". Jesus was a Jew, died as a Jew, and would have never preached anything contrary to the Jewish concept of God. Christians might say that he claimed "I am God" but even they cannot prove that he ever said "I am one of the three persons in the God-head".

Even Paul seems to have made distinction between "Father" being God and the Christ being the Lord. In his writings we see a clear distinction between "God" and Christ, Holy Ghost or anything else. We shall quote just a few examples from the New Testament where the Trinitarian misconception only confounds the matter:

MK(10:18), LK(18:19): And Jesus said to him, why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.

LK(10:21) In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth["Father" becomes Lord of Lord Christ!].

JN(9:42)	I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I myself, but he sent me.
JN(4:23-24)	But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
Acts(15:8)	God... giving them the Holy Ghost.
I Cor(8:5-6)	To us there is but one God, the Father... and one Lord Jesus Christ.
II Cor(4:4)	Christ, who is the image of God.
I Tim(1:2)	God the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.
I Cor(11:3)	The head of Christ is God
I Thess(1:1)	In God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
II Thess(2:16)	Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father.
Col(1:12-15)	Giving thanks to the Father ... who ... hath translated us into the kingdom of his beloved Son ... who is the image of the invisible God.
Jas(1:1)	James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.
I Jn(2:1)	And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
Jude(4)	the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Jude(21)	in the love of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

In actual fact, Jesus himself made the distinction between "God" and himself:

MT(5:8)	Blessed are the pure at heart, for they shall see God. [Jesus does not say: for they shall see the Father". or "they shall see Father, me and the Holy Ghost"].
MK(15:34)	Eloi Eloi, la'ma sa-bach-thani? which is, being interpreted, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
MT(27:46)	E'li, E'li, la'ma sa-bach tha-ni? that is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [Was Jesus thus calling to God who consisted of Father Son and the Holy Ghost. If he was God the Son then he could not be saying this to himself].
JN(17:3)	This is life eternal, that they might know thee [Holy Father] the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.

Thus there is always a distinction between God and Jesus Christ who is not God. Writers of the New Testament had no notion of Trinity in their minds. The confusion arose much later under pagan influences.

Virgin Birth: How does Jesus' "virgin birth" become a keystone of Christian faith? Outside of the Gospels all the New Testament authors, including Paul, seem to be unaware of this extraordinary miracle. In fact Paul asserts that Jesus was descended "of the seed of David"(II Tin 2:8) "according to the flesh"(Rom 1:3) "born of a woman born under the law"(Gal 4:4) Jesus himself told Nicodemus: "That which is born of flesh is flesh"(JN 3:6). Only Matthew and Luke place emphasis on virgin birth but between themselves produce conflicting genealogies for the one who (not having a father) ought to have had no genealogy.

Matthew: Joseph the husband of Mary and "of her" was born Jesus called Christ.
(One ancient manuscript reads: "Joseph who was married to the Virgin Mary, begat Jesus" thus asserting Joseph's paternity).

Luke: Jesus ... being the son ("as was supposed") of Joseph.

"Christians believe that Jesus' virgin birth was a one-time event and therefore a unique miracle. Even if this miracle did indeed occur, how would this be a tribute to Jesus? Since "with God nothing shall be impossible"(LK 1:37) and if Jesus was indeed a son of a virgin, without the seed of Joseph, then he was not of David's seed. If the Messiah had to be a son of David, as everyone seem to insist, then Jesus could not be the Messiah. It is significant that none of the creeds proclaim the doctrine of the Messiah.

It is said that Jesus had to be born of a virgin in order to be a perfect, sinless, Paschal lamb. If the Omnipotent God could produce a sinless person without a father, then there is no reason why this Omnipotent Creator could not create a sinless human being, yet born of a human father in spite of the Christian belief in the Original Sin which necessitated avoidance of a sinful human father. Indeed a "sin-free" birth would be a manifest miracle rather than a "virgin birth" to which only Joseph and Mary were privy to the knowledge. Joseph, "being a just man"(MT 1:19) having realized his espoused wife's predicament had not announced the (miracle of) virgin conception. The miracle was, therefore, not a manifest one. A "sinless" birth would be noticeable through the obviously pious behaviour and thus also serve as a perfect model of righteousness to the otherwise sin-prone humanity. [Also see Chapter XVI].

According to Paul: God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore then art no more a servant, but a Son, and if a Son then an heir of God through Jesus Christ"(Gal 4:4-7). Thus, even we who are not of virgin birth, can become God's sons through adoption. Virgin birth is, therefore, irrelevant.

Incarnation: According to all the three Creeds "God" incarnated himself in this world in the form of man Jesus. According to the Apostle's Creed he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. According to the Niceno-Chalcedonian Creed he was "begotten, not made...was incarnate by the Holy Ghost". The Athanasian Creed goes roundabout and says: "not made, not created, but begotten... begotten before the Word: perfect God and perfect Man"

If Jesus was begotten then it necessarily follows that he was begotten(sired) by someone (god the Father?) who pre-existed him in order to beget him. If he was incarnated by the Holy Spirit then that implies that he was unable to do so by himself. While God is no doubt perfect, to err is human and there could be no "perfect man". A human is therefore, not divine. Could divine be human? An essential property of being human is to be created, yet what is divine is not created: "Even every one that is called by my name, For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him"(Isa 43:7). If Jesus was incarnated into human form then did he shed his divinity in order to be human? N.-C. Creed proclaims that he was "equal to the Father, as touching his God-head, and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood." As such, at least in some ways he was not equal to the "Father". His relationship to the Holy Ghost is undefined perhaps to be defined by some future Ecumenical Council!!

According to the leaflet"ISA" issued by Fellowship of ISA Jesus, (Minneapolis, U.S.A.), supplied to the author by Billy Graham Evangelistic Association regarding appearance of an angel to Jesus' mother, Mary: "Though he was still an angel he appears as a man in order that she might perceive his presence and message in an understandable way. From this we can easily understand that spirit beings can and do adapt to circumstances and limitations of the physical realm in order to communicate with mankind. And finally, God spoke to mankind "from behind a veil". The dictionary meaning of the word veil is "anything that covers or conceals".

This statement is obviously misleading in view of the following:

- (i) According to the Bible itself "Man canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live"(Ex 33:20), "No man hath seen god at any time"(I Jn 3:12), "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see"(I Tim 6:16). Thus, God is not see-able in any form. Anything that we are capable of seeing, in any form, is not God. An angel may appear in any form and thus be seen for an angel is not an unseeable being.
- (ii) God uses other vehicles to communicate with mankind, e.g., angels. Angels carried messages to Sarah(Gen 16:17), to Abraham(Gen 22:11), to Joseph(MT 1:20) and Mary(LK 1:28), even to the shepherds in the country-side(LK 2:9). This is a limited experience available to a chosen few.
- (iii) God also conveys his message to His chosen people through visions such as Abraham received the message from the Lord(Gen 15:1). So did Jacob(Gen 35:1). Joseph could interpret dreams(Gen Ch. 40). Even ordinary person seem to receive divine messages in visions(Acts 9:10).
- (iv) Another vehicle of God's communications seems to be inspiration: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God... that the man of God may be perfect"(II Tim 3:16-17). "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"(II Pet 1:21). "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets"(Heb 1:1). Jesus also said: "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me"(JN 17:8). To admit that all these methods faile and God had to incarnate would imply that "the Scriptures"(Old Testament as well as New Testament) are unprofitable and, therefore, void.
- (v) "That which s born of flesh is flesh" according to Jesus himself(JN 3:6). If God needed to incarnate, then why was Jesus born of flesh? The angels who appeared to Joseph and Mary in human form were not of flesh born of women. They merely appeared in human form. Why could God not "appear" in such a form. Why did he have to be born of a woman of flesh to incarnate?

In any case, how do we establish that Jesus was really an incarnation of God? Which of his qualities are such that distinguish him from other human beings to establish that he was God incarnate? [Also see Chapter XVI]. Since Satan himself can change shape, e.g., as a serpent (Gen 1:3) how could we discern if Satan incarnates himself as a man?

If God really "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth him should not perish, but have everlasting life"(JN 3:16), then why did he not use His Grace and Mercy to announce through him a general amnesty? Why did He make this "only begotten Son" to suffer? Can we believe in the one who was made to suffer, and was thus not able to save himself in this very world, before our very own eyes, and promises to save us in the world yet unseen? Was God [Who? — Father, Son, or Holy Ghost?] so limited in His powers that he had to incarnate "to take away our sins"(I Jn 3:5)?

Jesus is said to be "perfect God and perfect Man" at the same time (TWO MINDS as known to the Church). How did he use his often opposing faculties at any one time? For example, God is Omnipresent, Man is not. The two opposing properties could not be exercised concurrently. He must have had to shed one of the opposing properties each time he acted. While exercising his (limited) human faculties he must have had to limit his (unlimited) divine faculties (And *vice versa*). Was he thus not divine at that particular moment? While man-Jesus was being crucified what happened to the (incarnated) divine Jesus? Did his divine spirit leave his earthly human body on the Cross? Is this the reason the man-Jesus cried out "Eli, Eli, lama sebachani — My God, My God, Why have ye forsaken me"?

"God-Incarnated" is a pagan idea. When Paul and Barnabas healed a certain man the pagans declared that "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men"(Acts 14:11). The two apostles had to tell them that "ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God"(Acts 14:15). Yet Paul's own followers believe that God had come down in the likeness of man (Jesus)! Incidentally, none of the Creeds specify why there had to be an incarnation.

Crucified: While the Apostle's Creed as well as the N.-C. Creed testify that Jesus was crucified/suffered under Pontius Pilate, thus making a time-space assertion, the Athanasian Creed mentions only his suffering. According to Paul: "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified"(I Cor 1:21-23). Surprisingly Paul himself does not relate Jesus to a time frame in his own writings — no earthly connection, no historical background—only an abstract "Christ Crucified".

Why is Christ Crucified so important? It is said that by being crucified Jesus laid down his life as a ransom(MT 20:28) bore our sins(Heb 9:28) on his own body(I Pet 2:24) for the forgiveness of our sins(MT 26:8) for the expiation of our sins(Heb 2:2) died for our sins(I Gal 1:4; I Jn 3:5) redeeming us with his precious blood(Eph 2:7; I Pet 1:18-19) in the body of his flesh through death(Col 1:21-22) thus justified us(Rom 8:30) and in doing so reconciled us to God(Rom 5:11), God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh(Rom 8:3). [Yet he was condemned to die who himself was sinless!]. We shall now "be saved from the wrath [of God] through him(Rom 5:9) and shall now have peace with God(Rom 5:1).

We may ask as to why was crucifixion the only method for ensuring our redemption? How do we know that blood of Jesus was the only price for our redemption acceptable to God. What about the blood of innumerable martyrs?—have these been useless, worthless, wasted? Why would God need to demonstrate Himself to be a vengeful God wanting to receive is "pound of flesh" in order to exercise His Grace and Mercy and grant us salvation? Was God's choice so limited that after giving His only begotten Son to the world He loved(JN 3:16) that He had to take him back in a most tragic manner? — and yet as a promise of salvation.

If Christ's suffering on the Cross was to be an example(I Pet 2:21) then what a horrible example was that? — submission to tyranny?, helplessness?, vain consolation to the persecuted? Was Jesus' suffering on the Cross the only example of suffering that was to be good example? What about suffering of everyday life?: Childlessness?, Loss of a child?, Divorce?, Blindness?, Pain of Cancer?

If "every man shall bear his own burden(Gal 6:5) then how come Jesus bore the burden of our sins on his body(I Pet 2:24)? If the previous covenant was faultless there would have been no need for a new covenant(Heb 8:7). The fault of the first covenant seems to be that it was dedicated by blood(Heb 9:18). Yet the very foundations of the so-called New Covenant are anchored in the blood of Christ. Do we now look for another covenant?

It is also questionable if Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross was all that voluntary. He prayed. "If it were possible, the hour might pass from him ... the spirit is truly ready, but the flesh is weak"(MK 14:35-38). "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"(MT 26:39), likewise LK 23:42). Thus Jesus, if not entirely unwilling, was at least a hesitant "Volunteer".

Resurrection: In none of the writings of Paul we find any reference to Jesus' life events or his teachings. He is concerned only with "Christ Crucified"(I Cor 1:21-23). Yet he brings him back: "Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel"(II Tim 2:8). To ward off the suspicion that resurrection may be his own concoction he argues that "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen"(I Cor 15:13). This minimizes Jesus' own role because his resurrection would then be no different from the other dead.

He even lists witnesses: "Cephas, then the twelve, after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ... of James, then of all the apostles, and last of all he was seen of me also"(1 Cor 15:3-8). Surprisingly he does not mention any of the women who are said to be among the very first witnesses. Did he also consider, as the Apostles did, that their sighting was "nonsense"? Or was the slighting by these women a later concoction adopted by the Gospel writers who, incidentally seem to have also considered Paul's sighting by "above five hundred" to be unreliable.

According to Paul resurrection is transformation from physical to spiritual existence(1 Cor 15:51-53). His own experience of "raised" Jesus was limited to "heard his voice, seeing no man"(Acts 9:4-8). Apparently, this was no more than a "vision". His analogy of Jesus rising with the rising of other dead also does not seem to be linked to a physical rising. "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"(1 Cor 5:32). In spite of some NT stories of "saints rising from their graves"(MT 27:52) the rising of the dead has to be at the Last dDay. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more"(Rom 6:9). This again is in the manner of other dead, nothing peculiar to Jesus. Recall the case of Lazarus: "Jesus saith to her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"(JN 11:24).

It is, however, unclear why Jesus, after being crucified had to be resurrected and then go to heaven rather than proceed from Calvary straight to heaven. According to Paul: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ, which made of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be a Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"(Rom 1:2-3) he "was made a little lower than the angels"(Heb 2:9) but was now made so much better than angels(Heb 1:4). This seems to imply that man-Jesus became Son of God [whatever that means] only after his crucifixion and resurrection. This is a clear negation of "incarnation."

Thus, if incarnation has to stay then the question, as to why Jesus had to resurrected, remains unanswered. Even the Gospels do not tell us anything about Jesus' activities during Jesus' forty days on earth after his stated resurrection. His resurrection and delay of forty days before proceeding to heaven is pointless if the Holy Ghost was henceforth to take charge of things.

Resurrection and the empty tomb are not manifest miracles. The witness by a few of Jesus' trusted disciples was also a limited experience, if at all. It would indeed have been a miracle if Jesus walked off the Cross and ascended to heaven in full view of the bystanders. The story of resurrection actually raises serious doubts about Jesus' death on the Cross.

Ascension: Now that Jesus had resurrected there was need to find a way for his final disappearance. So he was "carried to heaven" from Bethany"(LK 24:50-51) "taken up... from the mount called Olivet"(Acts 1:9, 12)". Luke, who is said to be the author of both these books, seems to be unsure whether Jesus ascended from Bethany or from the mount called Olivet. [Bethany is said to be about fifteen furlongs(JN 11:18) from Jerusalem while Olivet was "a Sabbath day's journey"(Acts 11:12) i.e. only about five furlongs]. According GNB Footnote: Some manuscripts do not have "and was taken up into heaven".

Having ascended to heaven Jesus is said to have been set by God at His own right hand in the heavenly places(Eph 1:20, Heb 1:3). So now "we have such a high priest, who is set in the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens ... Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant"(Heb 8:6, also 1 Tim 2:5). How do we know all this? Is it merely rhetoric? After all the Holy Ghost was to be the Advocate. What role does it(he? she?) play if Jesus himself becomes the Mediator?

Anyway, if infinite sacrifice had been made and ultimate price paid for our redemption then what is the need for a mediator or an Advocate? God's honour having been restored what is left to mediate? Having left this world and ascended to heaven Jesus should no more be man-God(or God-Man) but merely God(even if God the Son) by Himself. Does God Himself mediate to God(which?) in an arrangement where God Himself is also the Advocate [once as the "Son" then also as the "Holy Ghost"]?

If the Son mediates between "God" and Man and Holy Ghost also does the advocacy before the Father who takes the ultimate decision then the Father must be superior to the other two "persons". If Jesus sits at the right hand of God then "God" sits on the left hand of Jesus. Where does the Holy Spirit sit with respect to the position of "God"?

Interestingly "God, who is rich in mercy"(Eph 2:4) "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"(Eph 2:6). So now we are in good company. But this robs Jesus of his special place.

Second Coming: God gave the human-kind wisdom and conscience to distinguish between what is good and what is evil. Then he also sent prophets with scriptures "that the man of God may be perfect"(II Tim 3:16-17). This seems to be without redemption through the Cross. Then he sent Jesus for "salvation through faith in Jesus Christ"(II Tim 3:15) according to the Christian belief. But human-kind are such that it remains under the spell of the Devil. Since this was God's last ditch effort, it had to be in the last epoch of human history. It was to be while (John) the beloved disciple, was still alive that Jesus must return after his short visit to the seat of Majesty. Jesus had told Peter [so are we informed]: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee"(JN 21:22), "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come into power"(MK 9:1). So everyone started guessing:

I Cor (4:5): Judge nothing before time, until the Lord come.

I Thess(1:10): Wait for his Son from heaven, who he has raised from the dead.

I Thess(4:16-17): Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

I Thess(5:2), II Pet(3:10): The day of the Lord cometh as a thief at night.

II Thess(1:7-8): The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II Thess(2:2): The day of Christ is at hand.

I Pet(4:7,17): The end of all things is a hand... the time is come.

Yet Jesus did not return. John kept hoping: "He which testifies these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus"(Rev 22:20). But Jesus did not come and John died, waiting for the fulfilment of the promise said to have been made by Jesus [Did he?]. Apologies were then made:

II Pet(3:8-9): Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

When Jesus was born the angel of the Lord said unto the shepherds abiding in the field: "I bring you great tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"(LK 2:10). Isaiah is also said to have foretold: "All flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord"(LK 3:6). Paul

intimated Timothy that the man Christ "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:6). "Just for the unjust" (1 Pet 3:18) as Peter(?) also wrote. Jesus was to be a mediator of God's new covenant (Heb 12:24) with all humankind. "Yet when [if] Jesus returns he will assume a new role of judge and prosecutor. If this is what our mediator and saviour will do then what hope is left for humankind? No wonder even out of God's own people Israel, "only a remnant shall be saved" (Rom 9:27, Isa 10:22).

Salvation: The question now arises as to why do the Christians think that Jesus had to be divine? Why could Jesus not fulfill the role that they think that he needed to play, without being divine? Why did God the Son had to be "sent down to earth" by God the Father, to incarnate as a human, suffer on the Cross, go down to hell, come back to earth, go to heaven, only to come back again?

The answer lies in the doctrine whereby God (Father, Son, or Holy Ghost?) who is just must punish the mankind for every sin committed: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ex 18:20). It is "life for life" (Deut 19:21). However, God in His Mercy had allowed substitution to be made. An example was set when God provided a ram for sacrifice in place of Isaac (Gen 22:13) [incidentally the Biblical version does raise the possibility that it may have been Ishmael being the elder son, and that Israel's chauvinism and (misplaced) superiority complex transferred the incidence from Ishmael to Isaac. This is, however, a different question not being taken up here]. Under the Levitical system the people of Israel offered sacrifices of various kinds in order to get redemption of their sins, for every transgression. [Isaac's (or Ishmael's) sacrificial offering was not, however, for redemption of any of Abraham's sins, but a test of his obedience]. The roots of the problem lie in the "Original Sin" of Adam and Eve. It is said that in order for the human race to be saved a sacrifice of ultimate and supreme quality was needed.

It is the Christian belief that Jesus died for redemption of the sins of mankind. [If God needed a sacrifice then why did he not provide yet another ram, an unblemished one?]. Yet they limit that redemption: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (JN 3:16). Thus, Christ died not for the sins of the world but only of those who believe in him. This is confirmed by Jesus' alleged utterance: "I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me" (JN 17:9). This is contrary to "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (LK 3:6). The actual prophecy from Isaiah (40:5) reads thus: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together". Nothing about the redemption of the sins of believers only.

Strangely this substitute sacrifice for redemption of sins is quite different from the more logical version of John the Baptist: "The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins "repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (MT 3:2). Jesus too endorsed this call after his own baptism: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (MT 4:17).

Even so the Christians insist that Jesus had to offer himself as sacrifice for the remission of the sins of mankind. So we ask; why couldn't ANY man be sacrificed? After all in many pagan religions it was not uncommon to offer human sacrifices, many a times of virgin girls [Christians offer the son of a Virgin!]. It is said that "all men have sinned" (Rom 3:23) and, therefore, blemished. This is because we all have inherited the original sin of our father Adam. Jesus is said to have been born without the intervention of a human father so did not inherit the Original Sin. We might then ask, why not Melchizedek, without father, without mother, without descent? Why Jesus, the "seed" of a woman who is said to have led Adam into temptation? Why did God himself have to reincarnate as a human being?

It seems that the "ultimate" needed to be sacrificed: the Just God himself needed the proverbial pound of flesh, an infinite sacrifice; yet he loved the world so much that he sent his

"only begotten Son" to be sacrificed to satisfy his own lust for justice without mercy! Rather, God the Son had to offer himself to be sacrificed. "Jesus, by shedding his blood on the Cross atoned for the sins of mankind, and thus purchased redemption for sinners (Gal 2:20, 1 Pet 1:18-19). So that mankind could reconcile with God, the God thus "propitiated", man was justified, All too confusing but this is what is supposed to have happened. Jesus offered his sacrifice "willingly" despite his pleading that this "cup" be taken away from him.

If "infinite" was required to be sacrificed, then did "God" die? We are told that only the man Jesus died. Thus while infinite is required to be sacrificed, the infinite is actually not sacrificed. Yet Jesus is required to be divine to fulfill the role of the redeemer for only a "divine Saviour" could thus save the whole mankind. [Which he did not, because only those who believe in him shall be saved].

We may ask: if a sacrifice was needed and it was offered on the Cross at Calvary, then why did Jesus have to rise from the dead after purchasing our salvation with his blood? Having born of a woman in the fashion of mortals, and having died as a mortal, the human life cycle had been experienced and completed. Why come back to fulfill what was expected of him in the first place? Why did he not complete that task in one go? Furthermore, if Jesus's crucifixion was the only sacrifice acceptable to God, then what value bear the sacrifices of innumerable martyrs?

Since "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), all need to be saved. SALVATION, therefore, implies being saved from the penalty that we would normally have received through the judgment of just God. Let us discuss various terms that are used in describing the process of SALVATION.

Justification: "The wages of sin being death" (Rom 6:23), "the soul that sinneth dieth" (Jas 5:20) and may not rise with the saints or may even go down to Hades (Hell). Something must be done to JUSTIFY us, i.e., to free us from our guilt or blame. This has to be done through REDEMPTION or ATONEMENT.

To **Redeem** means to buy back. When a person needs to borrow money he pledges or pawns some item with the lender as security. Until the money is returned the borrower has no title or claim to the pledged item. When the borrowed money is paid back, the pledged item is redeemed. Similarly, in order to get back a prisoner in a war, his relatives had (in ancient times) to redeem him by paying a required sum of money for ransom. RANSOM is thus the price of redemption.

Atonement means to make amends. EXPIATION also means to make amends for any wrong doing. By making suitable amends we are RECONCILED to God whom we had insulted and annoyed by following the ways of the Devil in committing the sin. Thus through our reconciliation with God, He is PROPITIATED or appeased and therefore is once again friendly with us. There is no more rancour or quarrel between God and us. He will, therefore, not punish us for our sin. This is PERMISSION or FORGIVENESS of our sin. Having been pardoned for our transgression or sinful act we can now once again live in the Glory of God.

THEORIES OF ATONEMENT

It is most surprising that unlike the doctrines of Incarnation, Virgin Birth, and Crucifixion which are the qualifications required by the "Perfect One" who atones for our sins, the doctrine of Atonement is not part of any of the Christian creeds. In fact there has never been an official doctrine of the Atonement. Although several theories have been postulated the faithful are still in quandary as to how they will be saved by the Saviour. Thus while we are told to have faith in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, no one knows how it will be accomplished.

The Ransom Theory: For more than the first ten centuries saintly Christian scholars believed that man having transgressed was now in the grip of Satan. A loving God wanted to have the humanity freed from this grip. Being just he did not want to do it by force. So he so loved the world that he offered his only begotten Son as ransom. However, the Son escapes Satan's power and is reconciled with the Father.

This preposterous theory attributes quality of characters unworthy of even mortal humans let alone the Most Perfect God. Firstly, God must acknowledge and honour Satan's right to hold humanity into ransom because of its transgression (which means acting according to Satan's enticements against God Himself). Secondly, the God is made to look so limited in His means that he has to pay ransom to Satan in order to have His own Will prevail. Thirdly, God is Himself above deceit. To assume that God (?) offered His only begotten Son decentfully, so that he may later escape, is to blaspheme against God. There are other problems with the Ransom Theory. Satan should know better than assuming that he can hold none other than God(the Son) as a prize. He should have learnt his lesson after failing in his attempt to tempt Jesus soon after his baptism by John the Baptist.

In any case, once the ransom has been paid, the once estranged God should now be reconciled to humanity. This should be for ALL of humanity and not just for those who have had faith in this transaction. If this be not so then the ransom is a partial one.

Did Satan accept this deal only partially. It seems Satan being cunning also knew God's cunning trick and therefore himself acted cunningly and deceitfully and holds at least part of the humanity in his grip — Christ crucified notwithstanding. This also leaves out the whole, righteous or unrighteous, humanity before the advent of Jesus and his crucifixion still in the grip of Satan. According to Paul all those before the law will face the wrath of God "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God neither were thankful"(Rom 1:21) "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse"(Gal 3:10) "We are delivered from the law"(Rom 7:6) "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law"(Gal 4:13).

The whole theory is bizarre and preposterous since it also means that human suffering and death being finite even in its totality since creation to the end of the world, the suffering and sacrifice of man-Jesus could not be finite. Thus, infinite sacrifice of God's only begotten, Son is irrelevant and unnecessary.

The Satisfaction Theory: With so much confusion about the Ransom Theory, an eleventh century C.E. dogmatist Anselm postulated that sins of God's creatures insult and dishonour God who then needs SATISFACTION, an obligation to restore God's dishonour and undo the insult. Since God's honour is infinite, only the death of a perfect God-Man can provide that satisfaction. Again, there are many obvious flaws in this theory.

Firstly, since sins can be of all kinds there has to be a determination of the extent to which God's infinite honour has been tainted by each kind of "major" or "minor" sins. Not all kinds of sins ought to need an infinite sacrifice. Since even the totality of human sins since the creation to the end of the world would infinite, at least as compared to God's honour, it should not require an infinite sacrifice for satisfaction.

Secondly, if not following God's will brings infinite harm, following then God's will should enable man to do infinite good. This is beyond human capacity to do.

Thirdly, the dishonour to God can be only to the extent of the gravity of the sin, sinners ought not be punishable eternally for each kind of "minor", or even "major" sins. It ought to cease at some finite stage. However, if the dishonour to God was really infinite then it could not be properly satisfied even by punishing the sinners eternally. Humans do not have infinite qualities and would not bear an infinite level of punishment.

Fourthly, a just God who must deal out punishment for every sin, ought not to permit a propitiatory sacrifice of the just for the unjust, the sinless for the sinful, the innocent for the guilty, even on voluntary basis. Thus, while the humans would have no part in the process of satisfaction except the belief that someone else has paid the wages of sin through his suffering, God Himself exhibits "a conspicuously unsaintly behaviour by accepting vicarious satisfaction from his innocent "Son" just to appease His own infinite ego. [Notwithstanding "I shall have mercy, not sacrifice" (MT 8:13, 12:7; Hos 6:6)]. Sacrifice of the innocent would equally be wrong as the committal of sins by humans. Two wrongs could not cancel each other and make things right.

Fifthly, sin has been in existence ever since the "Original Sin". Why did it take so long for an incarnation and atonement to take place? It ought to have been in the beginning or the end of the world.

It also does not mean that further dishonour to God ceased thereafter and the world turned sinless. Would God need another sacrifice at the end of time? [Second coming of Jesus?] If no further propitiatory is needed, then the knowledge that the wages of sins had been paid for all times to come would only promote further sin and needless dishonour to God.

Sixthly, why was it necessary that the incarnate Son of God must die? Why could not some other punishment provide the desired satisfaction? If death was required, then why was there a resurrection? It would have been a harsher punishment if the Son remained unresurrected.

Seventhly, if satisfaction has been accepted through the infinite sacrifice then why did the Merciful God limit the justification only to those who have faith in the Son? Shall we then assume that even after the infinite sacrifice the satisfaction was not infinite but to the extent of the sins of the faithful only?

The Acceptance Theory: The thirteenth century C.E. theologian Duns Scots argued that God having a Free Will, the satisfaction actually derives, from the arbitrary choice of God. It is God himself who decided on the Incarnation and Crucifixion. Although Jesus as a man actually offered finite suffering, God freely decided to accept this to be enough for His satisfaction. However, it is unresolved why God who had a free choice among many alternates, chose the alternate which is ethically questionable and morally problematic.

The Penal Theory: Reformation theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the utterly sinful nature of humanity. They argued that Justice demanded appropriate punishment for sin and full compensation to be given to the injured party. For the sinners, therefore, the wrath of God was appropriate and justified. Jesus suffered as our substitute making us righteous and free of sin. Only with faith can we grasp Jesus' victory over sin and be saved.

This theory does not resolve the problems of the previous theories. Unfortunately even after Jesus' vicarious sacrifice humanity remains sinful — perhaps more so now. The Calvinist doctrine of the Elect is morally repugnant and unfair on the ground that God Himself picks up the Elect, as by a lottery, to bestow on them the way to salvation leaving others, by his infinite choice but for no fault of them, to be left out.

The Government Theory: According to seventh century C.E. thinker Hugo Grotius a good God ensures a good world government through deterrent punishment of the sinners. Punishment of sinless Jesus although not according to absolute justice, was necessary for preserving public order and good divine government, to show his hatred of sin as well as power of Clemency. All this assumes that except through an exemplary punishment being awarded to a sinless person God could not exhibit his power of punishment. It is morally unacceptable that God chose to punish a sinless person. Was He also short of other alternates? [He could instantly punish,

sinners to demonstrate his hatred for sin and His own power of punishment. That could be a really fearful deterrent too — good for a good government! Furthermore, if a demonstration was needed then why was this not done at the beginning of human race? Why did God not give an exemplary punishment to Adam and Eve to deter them from future transgression? Why did God wait until He chose to send Jesus to send His message belatedly? That would not be a good government!

The Moral Theory: According to this theory the Cross is the manifestation of the love of God that inspires love in the hearts of human beings which induces them to be free from sin and to be reconciled with God. Jesus taught the humankind the promise of God and then an example of a perfect life. This raises the question as to why only a suffering Jesus could convey such a message. A God who through his free choice would be pleased to see the suffering of His own Son could inspire awe, fear and forced obedience but hardly much love even by offering ultimate clemency. Why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer on the Cross to demonstrate a perfect life? Could it be not demonstrated even better by having a normal sinful nature yet leading a morally perfect life and dying a normal human death? Why a death on the cross rather than a death through suffering, for example, of cancer which many humans endure? Why was this not done "in the beginning"? Why wait till millions of year after creation?

The Christus Victor Theory: According to this theory in our own times, the Cross demonstrates God's victory over the evil powers of sin, death and Devil. In this victory through Christ the humanity is freed from these evil powers and is reconciled to God. The question once again remains unanswered as to why an all powerful God was left with no better alternate. Why did God have to incarnate to demonstrate that the evil powers could be defeated? Why could a mortal not provide a better, more natural, model for other mortals like him? In the battle against the evil forces God lost His only begotten Son while the evil forces continue to have domain over the sinful world. What sort of a victory is that? A Christus Crucified is hardly a manifested Christus Victor!

The Mystic Theory: Paul declared: "I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who live in me" (Gal 2:20). Thus the mystic way to be one with God was to be one with Christ who had declared that "Father and I are one" (JN 10:30). Thus an essential part of the Atonement is a mystic identification or union with Jesus' death and resurrection. Unfortunately such mystic language is beyond the comprehension of normal human beings. The problem of God's injustice inflicting pain on his innocent Son lingers on. In our union with Jesus we would feel directly the injustice of this suffering and death since we would be one with him. In any case if a mystic union with God was necessary for our salvation then why did we need to achieve it through being one with the incarnated and crucified "Son of God". Why do we need a mediator? Why could it not be directly between the Creator and His creation? Even if a mediator was necessary then why should he be made to suffer?

THE ROUTES TO SALVATION

According to Paul there have been three different periods wherein men will be dealt with according to God's method of justice enforced in each of these periods:

1. **Prior to the Law:** From the creation of the world when they knew God, they glorified him not as God changed the glory of incorruptible God into an image made like to incorruptible man wherefore God also gave them upto uncleanness served the creatures more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom 1:18-25), "Death reigned from Adam to Moses even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom 5:4).

From times immemorial Godly people had been seeking nearness to God through good and righteous works and love toward their fellow beings. There are plenty of quotations from the Bible itself. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God"(Eze 14:14). "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither Son, or daughter; they shall deliver their own soul by their righteousness"(Eze 14:20). "The Lord reward me according to my righteousness"(II Sam 22:17). Thus every soul has to answer for itself and seek salvation through its own(good) deeds. Peter declared: "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"(Act 10:35). Jesus himself declared: "These(the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal"(MT 25:46). "For by the words thou shalt be justified and by the words thou shalt be condemned. Even Paul admits: "righteous judgment of God who will render every man according to his deeds"(Rom 2:5-6), Christ crucified notwithstanding. It will be unfair for a just God to punish people inspite of their sinlessness but merely because their forefather, Adam, had fallen from grace.

In any case how do we know that people "knew God" ? If "honour and thanks" were required then prophets and sages had been preaching and righteous men doing that since times immemorial in all parts of the world some unknown to Paul himself. All this did not require incarnation although in most pagan culture gods were considered to have incarnated. Paul's language in the quotation from Romans(1:18-25) would very much describe his own followers.

If "honour and thanks" was the only requirement then why did God make things more difficult by providing the Law?

II. Under the Law: After Moses brought the Law people are supposed to have been "saved" by following the tenets of this Law. However, as is common knowledge, the news of this Law did not reach all corners of the world nor was it required of any to follow the Law except by the "Chosen People" of Israel. How was the rest of humanity to be saved? even though Paul declared: "Christ is the end of the Law"(Rom 10:4).

Jesus indeed laid emphasis on keeping the law: "A certain woman of the company lifted her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that have thee, and the paps that thou has sucked. But he said, yet rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it"(LK 11:27-28). "Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent"(JN 6:28-29). This was much before crucifixion! Jesus' emphasis on "works" is indicated by his declaration to the man who came upto Jesus and asked: Teacher what good thing must I do to get eternal life, Jesus' answer was only to "follow the commandments"(MK 10:17-18; MT 19:17; LK 18:18-19). Apparently Paul seems to advocate that whatever Jesus preached during his lifetime situation had changed after his crucifixion. It was now Christ Crucified.

III. Christ Manifested: The New Testament indicates three routes to salvation:

1. *Repentance:* This is what John the Baptist as well as Jesus himself proclaimed. This route is given in Jesus' teachings given in the three Synoptic Gospels — follow a strict ethical code even beyond the Jewish Law.
2. *Follow the example of Jesus by making great sacrifices.* This is indicate by the three Synoptic Gospels.
3. *By Faith in Jesus Christ:* Advocated by Paul in his Epistles and included also in John's Gospel.

Repentance and Works: Jesus laid down very stringent requirements through his Sermon on the Mount(MT 5, LK 11) and required that a person's righteousness must exceed that of the

scribes and the Pharisees(MT 5:20). Thus he required not only strict following of the Law, he demanded more. Mere lusty look is sin(MT 5:28), an angry word and you are in danger of hell fire(MT 5:22), judge not lest you be judged(MT 7:1) and even advised against going to a judge(MT 5:25). He speaks against divorce(MT 5:32, 39:9), advocated poverty and demanded of his followers to sell all they had and give to the poor(MT 9:21, LK 18:22). He declared that it was difficult for a rich man to enter heaven(MT 19:24, MK 10:23-25, LK 18:25). He required that "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"(MT 5:48). His own disciples were amazed, saying, "who then can be saved?"(MT 19:25, LK 18:26). He acknowledged that these were very difficult requirements(MT 7:13-14), yet he compared those who are lax to the house built on sand(MT 7:24-27).

Was Jesus really an absolutist? In spite of his very stringent requirements he was also a pragmatist. The Pharisees accused him for mixing with publicans and sinners. So he declared: "I am come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"(MK 2:17). "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick"(MT 9:12). When Zacchaeus the publican invited him to his house he accepted the invitation. Zacchaeus offered to repay half his wealth to the poor to compensate what he had defrauded(LK 19:8), which was more than what was demanded by the Law—the principal defraud plus a fifth more and sacrifice of a lamb to atone for the sin(Lev 6:17). Jesus remarked: "This day is salvation come to this house(LK 19:9) — this was before Jesus was crucified! But he made no similar demands on Levi(MK 2:14). All that he asked him was: "Follow me". He tolerated his disciples eating with "unclean" hands(MT 7:2) nor did he require of them to fast "as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast"(MK 2:19). He also told the Pharisees that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath because "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for Sabbath"(MK 2:27).

He did not contest the Law on stoning the adulterous woman yet challenged the self-righteousness of her accusers and let the woman off exhorting her to "sin no more"(JN 8:11). It is apparent that he was not condoning adultery but underlining the need to be righteous before judging others: "Ye judge after the flesh; judge no man"(JN 8:15), Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment"(JN 7:24). He told his disciples: "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplace"(MK 13:38), "Beware not the leaven of the bread but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees"(MT 16:12), "Whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not yet after their works for they say, and do not"(MT 23:3).

Did Jesus annul the Law as Paul keeps telling us? Far from it. He told of the parable of the Good Samaritan to place greater emphasis on the Commandment: "Love thy neighbour"(a fellow Jew). He wanted people to do even better.

In condemning divorce did he disallow which the Law allowed? he actually wanted to enforce it on a stricter ground: only if she commits fornication(MT 19:9). He wanted to put marriage on a firmer foundation and said that "all men cannot receive this saying, save those to whom it is given"(MT 19:11). Could the opposition to divorce be a later Pauline doctrine included by the Evangelist(1 Cor 7:10-11)? What if the man commits adultery? — Can a woman seek divorce on such a ground? [Unfortunately his doctrine was distorted by later Christians — Calistus, Bishop of Rome in 217 C.E. took a lenient view of unchastity allowing women of high ranks to have lovers as husbands without marriage on the ground that the superhuman ideal of a pure community could not be practiced in this earthly world].

He was too occupied with his plans for kingdom of Heaven to be bothered much with earthly matters. It is on such grounds that he left no commandments on slavery which was a common practice in Jesus' days. All of the rich and most of the middle class owned slaves. The High Priest had slaves, even the Temple estate owned slaves. The various translations of New

Testament seem to hide this fact by mis-translating the Greek word "doubles"(meaning slave) as "servant" and thus (deliberately?) obscure the impact. Thus, Malchus, the "servant" of the High Priest(JN 18:10) was actually a slave and not a servant as translated for us by various versions. More relevantly when Jesus said: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be his master and the servant his lord"(MT 10:24-25), he was talking of a "slave" and not a(hired) servant. Yet we hear nothing about him opposing slavery. As presented in the New Testament Jesus seems to convey that the problem of the slave was not to be free but to win the praise of his master.

Silence on the mortality of a practice can only be interpreted as at least a tacit approval. Later even in the nineteenth century C.E. Christians would indeed advance that logic to defend their enslaving of millions of people abducted from their own lands and even subjecting nations and continents to their colonial rules.

Was Jesus by not disapproving the practice actually approving it? It may be that because Jesus thought that the kingdom of Heaven was imminent that he did not consider it necessary to give his judgment, or did he think that his first priority was over-throwing the yoke of Roman slavery over the Jewish nation?

FAITH AND GRACE

It seems that when Christ on the Cross finished [DID HE? Then why return?] the work that God gave him to do, providing himself as a substitute for us sinners and also redemption of our sins, the Just God, like angry pagan gods, should have been propitiated, even pleased, and forgiven the mankind for their Original Sin and be reconciled of men. But no, it is not so. These provisions become effectual only for those who are convicted by the Holy Spirit and have faith. "Justification" is by Grace of God. It is a free favour to man. It cannot be earned by any amount of righteousness. Yet it remains conditional even after Jesus, the Christ, laid down his life to buy forgiveness for the sinners. What an unfortunate situation!

To dispense with righteous works Paul first disposes of the 'Law': "We are discharged from the Law"(Rom 7:6); "Christ ends the Law and brings righteousness"(Rom 10:4); "Quite independently of law, God's justice has been brought to light"(Rom 3:21). Even Jesus is made to say "The law and the prophets were until John, since that time the kingdom of God is preached(LK 16:16). According to Jesus redemption is limited to his followers only: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me"(JN 17:9). Jesus had said: "Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to complete"(MT 5:17). "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one title of the law to fail"(LK 16:17). Yet law and the prophets were made to end with John the Baptist!

According to Paul: "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"(Rom 5:6); "The just shall live by faith"(Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11); "A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith of Jesus Christ"(Gal 2:16); "everything that does not come from faith is sin"(Rom 14:23). He even contradicted Jesus' call for repentance: "gifts and callings of God are without repentance"(Rom 12:29).

From times immemorial Godly people had been seeking nearness to God through good and righteous works and love toward their fellow beings. There are plenty of quotations from the Bible itself. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God"(Eze 14:14). "Though Noah Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son, nor daughter; they shall deliver their own soul by their righteousness"(Eze 14:20). "The Lord reward me according to my righteousness"(II Sam 22:17, 21). Thus every soul has to answer for itself and seek salvation through its own (good) deeds. Peter declared: "In every nation he that

feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"(Act 10:35). Jesus himself declared: "These (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal"(MT 25: 46). For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Jesus indeed laid emphasis on keeping the law. "A certain woman of the company lifted her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that have thee, and the paps that thou has sucked. But he said, yet rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it"(LK 11:27-28). "Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent"(JN 6:28-29). This was much before crucifixion! Jesus' emphasis on "works" is indicated by his declaration to the man who came upto Jesus and asked, Teacher what good thing must I do to get eternal life, Jesus' answer was only to follow the commandments(MK 10:17-18 MT 19:17, LK: 18: 18-19).

Interestingly, challenge to Paul's insistence on "Justification by faith" comes from within the New Testament: "though a man has faith what good is that faith if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him? It is by his actions that a person is put right with God, and not by his faith alone"(Jas 2:4). "Faith without works is dead"(Jas 2:20). "By works is man justified not by faith only"(Jas 2:24). The Protestant reformist Martin Luther recognised an irreconcilable conflict between James' teaching on justification by works and Paul's insistence on justification by faith!

According to Calvin men were not only predestined to be saved, but to be damned. "Satan and the devils acted on the command of God. They can neither conceive any evil nor, when they have conceived it, contrive to do it, not having contrived it to lift even a little finger to execute it, save in so far as God commands them. God forewills all the tiniest events or actions from all eternity, whether good or evil, according to this plan, some he plans to save, by grace (for all men are evil and worthy of damnation), some he plans to damn". If we ask why God takes pity on some, and why he lets go of the others, there is no other answer but that it pleases him to do so.

The Scottish monk Pelagius repudiated the doctrine of Original Sin. He contended that sin was a matter of Free Will, a choice rather than an unavoidable inheritance from Adam. He challenged (Saint) Augustine's insistence that salvation was not within man's power to achieve, but was only within the Divine power to bestow. Julian of Eclanum "One of Pelagius' followers, wrote to Augustine: You ask me why I would not contend with the idea that there is a sin that is part of human nature. I answer: it is improbable. It is untrue. It is unjust and impious. It makes it seem as if the devil were the maker of men. It violates and destroys the freedom of the will... by saying that men are so incapable of virtue that in the very womb of their mothers they are filled with bygone sins .. and that is disgusting as it is blasphemous, this view of yours fosters, as its most conclusive proof, on the common decency with which we cover our genitals".

The official Church was appalled by this heresy for if it were admitted that men were not totally deprived from birth but could achieve righteousness and grace through their own ability, then of what avail was Jesus' atonement on the Cross? If the redeemer was not a necessity for mankind, no more was the Church. Driven by Episcopal enemies Pelagius moved to Palestine about 413 C.E. hoping to find a more sympathetic religious climate. Here he came up with the cantankerous (Saint) Jerome, who promptly denounced him as an old fool dulled by Scottish porridge. He, of course, secured the condemnation of this Pelagian heresy by the official Church.

The fact is that God is not only Just but also Merciful, Benevolent and Forgiving. If there was an "Original Sin" for which the whole of mankind stands condemned then

redemption has to come through Mercy and not sacrifice. In fact it is written that "I shall have Mercy, and not sacrifice(MT 9:13, 12:7; Hos 6:6).

FURTHER PROBLEMS WITH THE CREEDS

It is pertinent to note that Jesus' ethical teachings are conspicuously absent in epistles whether by Paul or other books outside of the four Gospels. It is often explained that Christians believe that if one accepts Jesus as the Son of God then one will accept his ethical teachings. It may, however, be pointed out that Moses did not need to be divine for his teachings to be accepted. A later claimant to prophethood, Muhammad, also did not claim to be divine yet his teachings were more successfully and wholeheartedly adopted by a very large number of people during his own lifetime more prominently than even Moses. Why would Jesus need to be divine to have his teachings to be accepted?

In any case none of the indicated routes of salvation given in the Gospels seem to be logical in the worldly affairs. Love thy neighbour may be godly but how can one follow "love thy enemy" and turn the other cheek if hit on one? Leaving aside one's own ego, for you may afford to be saintly, it will encourage the enemy, the bully that he has proved to be, to do further harm and be encouraged to take advantage of your "cowardice". Something needs to be done to stop him. Love may win in the long run but a deterrent is certainly needed to stop his aggression. at least for the present. Turning the other cheek would only make things worse. Even a loving parent tolerating the unreasonable tantrums of the beloved child will only spoil the child. To follow the advice "judge not others"(MT 7:1-2) was found unpractical even by Paul(I Cor 5:3-4). The Christian Church as a whole has found it unworkable.

What does "faith in redemption through the blood of Christ" really mean? How do we really know God has really accepted our ransom? After all Jesus never confirmed that during his own lifetime. How do we know if Paul represents Jesus? In any case various routes given in the New(?) Testament are not compatible with an all-powerful, all-good God.

The Creeds, debated in Councils and synods are, to borrow a phrase from II Peter(11:16), "cunningly devised fables". For example, Paul said: "To us there is but one God, the Father, ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ"(I Cor 8:6). Yet the Athanasian Creed declares: "Father is God, Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God ... Father is Lord, Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord ... We are forbidden by Catholic Religion to say, There be three Gods or three Lords."

"To the Wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, domain and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 25).

CLEAR ROAD TO SALVATION

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

"But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

"All his transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"(Eze 18:20-23).

Salvation lies in our repentance and righteousness and in God's Mercy and Forgiveness.

The following article is adapted from the book "Muhammad in the Bible" by Prof. Abdul Ahad Dawud, former Bishop of Uramiah.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DESCRIBED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AS OTHERWISE THAN A PERSONALITY

A careful examination of the following passages in the New Testament will convince the readers that the Holy Spirit, not only is it not the third person of the Trinity, but is not even a distinct person. But the "Paraclete" foretold by Jesus(P) Christ is a distinct person. This fundamental difference between the two is, therefore, a decisive argument against the hypothesis of their being one and the same person.

(a) In Luke(11:13) the Holy Spirit is declared to be a "gift" of God. The contrast between the "good gifts" which are given by wicked parents and the Holy Spirit which is bestowed upon the believers by God entirely excludes the idea of any personality of the Spirit. Can we conscientiously and positively affirm that Jesus(P) Christ, when he made the above contrast, meant to teach his hearers that "God the Father" makes a gift of "God the Holy Spirit" to His earthly "children"? Did he ever insinuate that he believed the third person of the Trinity to be a gift of the first person of the Trinity? Can we conscientiously admit that the Apostles believed this "gift" to be God the Almighty offered by God the Almighty to mortals?

(b) In 1 Cor(2:12) this Holy Spirit is described in the neuter gender "the Spirit from God". St. Paul clearly states that as the Spirit which is in man makes him know the things that appertain to him so the Spirit of God makes a man know the things divine(1 Cor 11). Consequently, the Holy Spirit here is not God but a divine issue, channel, or medium through which God teaches, enlightens, and inspires those whom He pleases. It is simply an action of God upon human soul and mind. The teacher, the enlightener, and the inspirer is not directly the Spirit but God Himself. Incidentally Philon was a student of Plato's philosophy. He had never seen Plato, but only learned Plato's philosophy and became a philosopher and a Platonist. In the same sense I say Peter the Apostle and Ali the Imam received the Holy Spirit of God and became inspired with the knowledge of God. Just as the philosophy of Plato is not Plato, and the Platonist Philon not the creator of that specific wisdom, so Peter and Ali were not God. They were divine in the sense that they were enlightened by the Spirit of God. St. Paul clearly sets forth, in the passage just quoted, that the human soul cannot discern the truths concerning God but only through His Spirit, inspiration, and direction.

(c) Again, in 1 Cor(6:19) we read that the righteous servants of God are called "the temple of the Holy Spirit" which they "received from God." Here again the Spirit of God is not indicated to be a person or an angel, but His virtue, word, or power and religion. Both the body and the soul of a righteous believer are compared with a temple dedicated to the worship of the Eternal.

(d) In the Epistle to the Romans(8:9) this same spirit that "lives" within the believers is called alternately "the Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ." In this passage "the Spirit" means simply the faith and the true religion of God which Jesus(P) proclaimed. Surely this spirit cannot mean to be the Christian ideal of the Holy Ghost, viz. another third of the three.

Whether the Christian baptismal formula is authentic or spurious I believe there is a hidden truth in it. For it must be admitted that the Evangelists never authorize the use of it in any other ritual, prayer, or creed other than that of Baptism. This point is extremely important. St. John had foretold the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire by the Prophet Muhammad, as we saw in the preceding articles. The immediate Baptizer being God Himself, and the mediate the Son of Man or the Barnasha of the vision of Daniel, it was perfectly just and legitimate to mention those two names as the first and second efficient causes; and the name of the Holy Spirit, too, as the causa materialis of the Sibghatu-l-Lah! Now the divine appellation "Father," before its abuse by the Church, was rightly invoked. In fact, the Sibghatu-l-Lah is a new birth, a nativity into the Kingdom of God(which is Islam). The Baptizer who causes this regeneration is directly Allah. To be born in the religion of Islam, to be endowed with the faith in the true God, is the greatest favour and gift of the "Heavenly Father" — to use the evangelistic expression. In this respect God is infinitely more beneficent than an earthly father.

As regards the second name in the formula, "the Son," one is at a loss to know who or what this "son" is? Whose son? If God be rightly addressed "Father," then one is curious, inquisitive, and anxious to know which of His innumerable "sons" is intended in the baptismal formula. Jesus(P) taught us to pray "Our Father who art in heaven." If we are His sons in the sense of His creatures, then the mention of the word "son" in the formula becomes somehow senseless and even ridiculous. We know that the name "the Son of Man" — or "Barnasha" — is mentioned eighty-three times in the discourses of Jesus(P). The Qur'an never calls Jesus(P) "the son of man" but always "the son of Mary." he could not call himself "the son of man" because he was only the "son of woman." There is no getting away from the fact. You may make him "the son of God" as you foolishly do, but you can't make him "the son of man" unless you believe him to be the offspring of Joseph or someone else, and consequently fasten on to him the taint of illegitimacy. [It is interesting that the Good News Bible translates "son of man" as "mortal man". If Jesus(P) is claimed to be the "Eternal Word" then obviously he is not the Son of Man].

I don't know exactly how, whether through intuition, inspiration, or dream, I am taught and convinced that the second name in the formula is an ill-fated corruption of "the Son of Man," viz. the Barnasha of Daniel(Ch.8), and therefore Ahmad "the Periqlytos"(Paraclete) of St. John's Gospel.

As to the Holy Spirit in the formula, it is not a person or an individual spirit, but an agency, force, energy of God with which a man is born or converted into the religion and knowledge of the One God.

The "Paraclete" does not signify either "consoler" or "advocate"; in truth, it is not a classical word at all. The Greek orthography of the word is Paraklytos which in ecclesiastical literature is made to mean "one called to aid, advocate, intercessor"(Dict. Grec. Francais, by Alexandre). One need not profess to be a Greek scholar to know that the Greek word for "comforter" or "consoler" is not "Paraklytos" but "Paracalon". I have no Greek version of the Septuagint with me, but I remember perfectly well that the Hebrew word for "comforter"("mnahem") in the Lamentations of Jeremiah(1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21, etc.) is translated into Parakaloon, from the verb parakaloo, which means to call, to invite, exhort, console, pray, invoke. It should be noticed that there is a long alpha vowel after the consonant kappa in the "Paracalon" which does not exist in the "Paraklytos." In the phrase(He who consoles us in all our afflictions) "paracalon" and not "paraklytos" is used.('I exhort, or invite, thee to work'). Many other examples can be cited here. There is another Greek word for comforter and consoler, i.e. "Parygorytys" from "I console."

As to the other meaning of "intercessor or advocate" which is given in the ecclesiastical word "Paraclete," I again insist that "Paracalon" and not "Paraclytos" can convey in itself a similar sense. The proper Greek term for "advocate" is Sunegorus and for "intercessor" or "mediator" Meditea.

Paraklytos is a corruption. En passant, I wish to correct an error into which the French savant Ernest Renan has also fallen. If I recollect well, Monsieur Renan, in his famous *The Life of Christ*, interprets the "Paraclete" of St. John (JN 14:16, 26; 15:7; I John 2:1) as an "advocate." He cites the Syro-Chaldean form "Peraklit" as opposed to "Ktighra" "the accuser" from Kategorus. The Syrian name for mediator or intercessor is "mis'aaya," but in law courts the "Snighra" (from the Greek Sunegorus) is used for an advocate. Many Syrians unfamiliar with the Greek language consider the "Paraqlita" to be really the Aramaic or the Syriac form of the "Paraclete" in the Pshitttha Version and to be composed of "Paraq," "to save from, to deliver from" and "lita" "the accursed." The idea that Christ is the "Saviour from the curse of the law," and therefore he is himself too "Paraqlita" (1 John 2:1), may have led some to think that the Greek word is originally an Aramaic word, just as the Greek sentence "Maran atha" in Aramaic is "Maran Athi," i.e., "our Lord is coming" (1 John xvi. 22), which seems to be an expression among the believers regarding the coming of the Last Great Prophet. This 'Maran Athi,' as well as, especially, the baptismal formula, contains points too important to be neglected. They both deserve a special study and a valuable exposition. They both embody in themselves marks and indications otherwise than favourable to Christianity.

Ignorance commits many errors. For centuries the ignorant Latins and Europeans have been writing the name of Muhammad as "Mahomet," that of Mushi as "Moses," is it, therefore, small wonder that some sturdy Christian monk or scribe should have written the true name in the corrupted form of Paraklytos? The former means the "most illustrious, Praiseworthy," but the corrupted form means nothing at all except a standing shame to those who have for eighteen centuries understood it to signify an advocate or a consoler.

"And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Periqlytos, that he may stay with you for ever" (JN 14:16, etc.). There is some incoherency in the words ascribed to Jesus(P) by the Fourth Gospel. It reads as if several Periqlytes had already come and gone, and that "another Periqlytos" would be given only at the request of Jesus(P). These words also leave behind the impression that the Apostles were already made familiar with this name which the Greek text renders periqlytos. The adjective "another" preceding a foreign noun for the first time announced seems very strange and totally superfluous. There is no doubt that the text has been tampered with and distorted. It pretends that the Father will send the Periqlyte at the request of Jesus(P), otherwise the Periqlyte would never have come! The word "ask" too, seems superficial, and unjustly displays a touch of arrogance on the part of the Prophet of Nazareth. If we want to find out the real sense in these words we must correct the text and supply the stolen or corrupted words, thus:

"I shall go to the Father, and he shall send you another apostle whose name shall be Periqlytos, that he may remain with you for ever." Now with the additional underlined words, both the robbed modesty of Jesus(P) is restored and the nature of the Periqlyte identified.

We have already seen that the periqlyte is not the Holy Spirit, that is to say, a divine person, Gabriel, or any other angel. It now remains to prove that the Periqlyte would not be a consoler nor an advocate between God and man.

1. The Periqlyte is not the "Consoler" nor the "intercessor". We have fully shown the material impossibility only of discovering the least signification of "consolation" or of

"intercession". Christ does not use Paraqalon. Besides, even from a religious and moral point of view the idea of consolation and intercession is inadmissible.

(a) The belief that the death of Jesus(P) upon the Cross redeemed the believers from the curse of original sin, and that his spirit, grace, and presence in the Eucharist would be for ever with them, left them in need of no consolation or of the coming of a consoler at all. On the other hand, they needed such a comforter, then all the Christian assumptions and pretensions concerning the sacrifice at Calvary fall to the ground. In fact, the language of the Gospels and that of the Epistles explicitly indicates that the second coming of Jesus(P) upon the clouds was imminent(MT 16:28; MK 9:1; LK 9:27; I Jn 2:18; II Tim. 2:1 II Thess. 2:3, etc.)

(b) Consolation can never make restitution of the loss. To console a man who has lost his sight, wealth, son, or situation, cannot restore any of those losses. The promise that a consoler would be sent by God after Jesus(P) had gone would indicate the total collapse of all hope in the triumph of the Kingdom of God. The promise of a consoler indicates mourning and lamentation and would naturally drive the Apostles into disappointment if not into despair. They needed not a consoler in their distress and affections, but a victorious warrior to crush the Devil and his power, one who would put an end to their troubles and persecutions.

(c) The idea of an "intercessor" between God and man is even more untenable than that of the "consoler." There is no absolute mediator between the Creator and the creature. The unity of Allah alone is our absolute intercessor. The Christ who advised his audience to pray to God in secret, to enter the closet and shut the door and then to pray -- for only under such a condition their heavenly "Father" would hear their prayer and grant them His grace and succour --- could not promise them an intercessor. How to reconcile this contradiction!

(d) All believers, in their prayers, intercede for each other, the prophets and angels do the same. It is our duty to invoke God's mercy, pardon, and help for ourselves as well as for others. But God is not bound or obliged to accept the intercession of anyone unless He pleases. If Allah had accepted the intercession of His Holy Servant Muhammad, all men and women would have been converted to the religion of Islam.

I would be duly grateful to the person through whose intercession I obtained pardon, and relief. But I shall always dread the judge or the despot who was delivering me into the hands of an executioner. How learned these Christians are, when they believe that Jesus(P) at the right hand of his Father intercedes for them, and at the same time believe in another intercessor -- inferior to himself -- who sits on the throne of the Almighty! The Holy Qur'an strictly forbids the faith, the trust in a "shafi:" or intercessor. Of course, we do not know for certain, but it is quite conceivable that certain angels, the spirits of the prophets and those of the saints, are permitted by God to render help and guidance to those who are placed under their patronage. The idea of an advocate before the tribunal of God, pleading the cause of his clients, may be very admirable, but it is erroneous, because God is not a human judge subject to passion, ignorance, partiality, and all the rest of it. The Muslims, the believers, need only education and religious training; God knows the actions and the hearts of men infinitely better than the angels and prophets. Consequently there is no necessity for intercessors between the Deity and the creatures.

(e) The belief in intercessors emanates from the belief in sacrifices, burnt offerings, priesthood, and a massive edifice of superstition. This belief leads men into the worship of sepulchres and images of saints and martyrs; it helps to increase the influence and domination of the priest and monk; it keeps the people ignorant in the things divine; a dense cloud of the intermediary dead cover the spiritual atmosphere between God and the spirit of man. Then this belief prompts men who, for the pretended glory of God and the conversion of the people

belonging to a different religion than theirs, raise immense sums of money, establish powerful and rich missions, and lordly mansions; but at heart those missionaries are political agents of their respective Governments. The real cause of the calamities which have befallen the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Chaldeo-Assyrians in Turkey and Persia ought to be sought in the treacherous and revolutionary instruction given by all the foreign missions in the East. Indeed, the belief in the intercessors has always been a source of abuse, fanaticism, persecution, ignorance, and of many other evils.

Having proved that the "Paraclete" of St. John's Gospel does not and cannot mean either "consoler" or "advocate," nor any other thing at all, and that it is a corrupted form of Periqlytos, we shall now proceed to discuss the real signification of it.

2. Periqlytos etymologically and literally means "the most illustrious, renowned, and praiseworthy." I take for my authority Alexandre's Dictionnaire Grec-Francais==Periqlytos, "Qu'on peut entendre de tous les cotes;"==qu'il est facile a entendre. Tres celebre," etc.;==Perikleitos, tres celebre, illustre, glorieux;==Periqleys, tres celebre, illustre, glorieux," from==Kleos, glorie, renommee, celebrite." This compound noun is composed of the prefix "peri," and "kleotis," the latter derived from "to glorify, praise." The noun, which I write in English characters Perikleitos or Periqlytos, means precisely what AHMAD means in Arabic, namely the most illustrious, glorious, and renowned. The only difficulty to be solved and overcome is to discover the original Semitic name used by Jesus(P) Christ either in Hebrew or Aramaic.

(a) The Syriac Pshitha, while writing "Paraqlaita," does not even in a glossary give its meaning. But the Vulgate translates it into "consolator" or "consoler." If I am not mistaken the Aramaic form must have been "Mhamda" or "Hamida" to correspond with the Arabic "Muhammad" or "Ahmad" and the Greek "Periqlyte."

The interpretation of the Greek word in the sense of consolation does not imply that the name Periqlyte itself is the consoler, but the belief and the hope in the promise that he will come "to console" the early Christians. The expectation that Jesus(P) would come down again in glory before many of his auditors had "tasted the death" had disappointed them, and concentrated all their hopes in the coming of the Periqlyte.

(b) The Qur-anic revelation that Jesus(P), the son of Mary, declared unto the people of Israel that he was "bringing glad tidings of an apostle, who shall come after me and whose name shall be Ahmad," is one of the strongest proofs that Muhammad was truly a Prophet and that the Qur-an is really a divine revelation. He could never have known that the Periqlyte meant Ahmad, unless through inspiration and divine revelation. The authority of the Qur-an is decisive and final; for the literal signification of the Greek name exactly and indisputably corresponds with Ahmad and Muhammad. Indeed, the Angel Gabriel, or the Holy Spirit, seems even to have distinguished the positive from the superlative form the former signifying precisely Muhammad and the latter Ahmad.

It is marvellous that this unique name, never before given to any other person, was miraculously preserved for the most Illustrious and Praiseworthy Apostle of Allah! We never come across any Greek bearing the name Perikleitos(or Periqlytos), nor any Arab bearing the name of Ahmad. True, there was a famous Athenian called Periqleys which means "illustrious," etc., but not in the superlative degree.

(c) It is quite clear from the description of the Fourth Gospel that Periqlyte is a definite person, a created holy spirit, who would come and dwell in a human body to perform and accomplish the prodigious work assigned to him by God, which no other man, including Moses(P), Jesus(P), and any other prophet, had ever accomplished.

We, of course, do not deny that the disciples of Jesus(P) did receive the Spirit of God, that the true converts to the faith of Jesus(P) were hallowed with the Holy Spirit, and that there were numerous Unitarian Christians who led a saintly and righteous life. On the day of the Pentecost — that is, ten days after the Ascension of Jesus(P) Christ — the Spirit of God descended upon the disciples and other believers numbering one hundred and twenty persons, in the form of tongues of fire(Acts 2); and this number, which had received the Holy Spirit in the form of one hundred and twenty tongues of fire, was increased unto three thousand souls who were baptized, but were not visited by the flame of the Spirit. Surely one definite Spirit cannot be divided into six-score of individuals. By the Holy Spirit, unless definitely described as a personality, we may understand it to be God's power, grace, gift, action, and inspiration. Jesus(P) had promised this heavenly gift and power to sanctify, enlighten, strengthen, and teach his flock; but this Spirit was quite different from the Periqlyte who alone accomplished the great work which Jesus(P) and after him the Apostles were not authorized and empowered to accomplish, as we shall see later.

(d) The early Christians of the first and second centuries relied more upon tradition than upon writings concerning the new religion. Papias and others belong to this category. Even in the lifetime of the Apostles several sects, Pseudochrists, Antichrists, and false teachers, tore asunder the Church(1 John 2:18-26; II Thess. 2:1-12; II Peter 2,3:1, II John 7-13; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3. 1-13; etc.). The "believers" are advised and exhorted to stick to and abide by the Tradition, namely, the oral teaching of the Apostles. These so-called "heretical" sects, such as the Gnostics, Apollinarians, Docetae, and others, appear to have no faith in the fables, legends, and extravagant views about the sacrifice and the redemption of Jesus(P) Christ as contained in many fabulous writings spoken of by Luke(1:1-4). One of the heresiarchs of a certain sect — whose name has escaped my memory(MONTANUS?) — actually assumed "Perikleitos" as his name, pretending to be "the most praiseworthy" Prophet foretold by Jesus(P), and had many followers. If there were any authentic Gospels authorized by Jesus(P) Christ or by all the Apostles, there could be no such numerous sects, all opposed to the contents of the books contained in or outside the existing New Testament. We can safely infer from the action of the pseudo-Periqlyte that the early Christians considered the promised "Spirit of Truth" to be a person and the final Prophet of God.

3. There is not the slightest doubt that by "Periqlyte," Muhammad, i.e. Ahmad, is intended. The two names, one in Greek and the other in Arabic, have precisely the same signification, and both mean the "most illustrious and Praised", just as "Pneuma" and "Ruh" mean nothing more or less than "Spirit" in both languages. We have seen that the translation of the word into "consoler" or "advocate" is absolutely untenable and wrong. The compound form of Paraqalon is derived from the verb composed of the prefix Para-qalo, but the Periqlyte is derived from the Peri-qluo. The difference is as clear as anything could be. Let us examine, then, the marks of the Periqlyte which can only be found in Ahmad — Muhammad.

(a) Muhammad alone revealed the whole truth about God, His unity, religion, and corrected the impious libels and calumnies written and believed against Himself and many of His holy servants.

Jesus(P) is reported to have said about Periqlyte that he is "the Spirit of Truth," that he "will give witness" concerning the true nature of Jesus(P) and of his mission(John 14, 17; 15 26). In his discourses and orations Jesus(P) speaks of the pre-existence of his own spirit(John 8:58, 17:5, etc.). In the Gospel of Barnabas, Jesus(P) is reported to have often spoken of the glory and the splendour of Muhammad's spirit whom he had seen. There is no doubt that the Spirit of the Last Apostle was created long before Adam. Therefore Jesus(P), in speaking about him,

naturally would declare and describe him as "the Spirit of Truth." It was this Spirit of Truth that reprimanded the Christians for dividing the unity of God into a trinity of persons; for their having raised Jesus(P) to the dignity of God and Son of God, and for their having invented all sorts of superstitions and innovations. It was this Spirit of Truth that exposed the frauds of both the Jews and the Christians for having corrupted their Scriptures; that condemned the former for their libels against the chastity of the Blessed Virgin and against the birth of her son Jesus(P). It was this Spirit of Truth that demonstrated the birthright of Ishmael, the innocence of Lot, Solomon, and many other prophets of old and cleared their name of the slur and infamy cast upon them by the Jewish forgers. It was this Spirit of Truth, too, that gave witness about the true Jesus(P), man, prophet, and servant of God; and has made it absolutely impossible for Muslims to become idolaters, magicians, and believers in more than the one and only God, Allah.

(b) Among the principal marks of Periqlyte, "the Spirit of Truth," when he comes in the person of the "Son of Man" — Ahmad — is "he will chastise the world for sin"(John xvi 8,9). No other servant of Allah, whether a king like David and Solomon or a prophet like Abraham and Moses, did carry on this chastisement for sin to the extreme end, with resolution, fervour, and courage as Muhammad did. Every breach of the law is a sin, but idolatry is its mother and source. We sin against God when we love an object more than Him, but the worship of any other object or being besides God is idolatry, the evil and the total negligence of the Good — in short, sin in general. All the men of God chastised their neighbours and people for sin, but not "the world," as Muhammad did. He not only rooted out idolatry in the peninsula of Arabia in his lifetime, but also he sent envoys to Chosroes Parviz and to Heraclius, the sovereigns of the two greatest empires, Persia and Rome, and to the King of Ethiopia, the Governor of Egypt, and several other Kings and emirs, inviting them all to embrace the religion of Islam and to abandon idolatry and false faiths. The chastisement by Muhammad began with the delivery of the word of God as he received it, namely, the recital of the verses of the Qura-an; then with preaching, teaching, and practising the true religion; but when the Power of Darkness, idolatry, opposed him with arms he drew the sword and punished the unbelieving enemy. This was in fulfilment of the decree of God(Dan 7). Muhammad was endowed by God with power and dominion to establish the Kingdom of God, and to become the first Prince and Commander-in-Chief under the "King of Kings and the Lord of Lords."

(c) The other characteristic feature of the exploits of Periqlyte — Ahmad — is that he will reprove the world of righteousness and justice(loc.cit). The interpretation "of righteousness, because I am going to my Father"(John 16:10) put into the mouth of Jesus(P) is obscure and ambiguous. The return of Jesus(P) unto his God is given as one of the reasons for the chastisement of the world by the coming Periqlyte. Why so? And who did chastise the world on that account? The Jews believed that they crucified and killed Jesus(P), and did not believe that he was raised and taken up into heaven. It was Muhammad who chastised and punished them severely for their infidelity. "Say, O Muhammad, to the unbelieving Jews: They did not really kill him; but God took him up unto Himself"(Qur'an, 4:158). The same chastisement was inflicted upon the Christians who believed and still believe that he was really crucified and killed upon the Cross, and imagine him to be God or the son of God. To these the Qur-an replied: "Yet they [the Jews] slew him not, nor crucified him, but the matter was made dubious to them." Several believers in Jesus(P) in the very beginning of Christianity denied that Christ himself suffered upon the Cross, but maintained that another among his followers, Judas Iscariot or [Thomas, the Twin] another very like him, was seized and crucified in his stead. The Corinthians, the Basilidians, the Corpocratians and many other sectaries held the same view. I have fully discussed this question of the Crucifixion in my work entitled *Injil wa Salib*("The

Gospel and the Cross"), of which only one volume was published in Turkish just before the Great War]. So the justice done to Jesus(P) by Ahmad was to authoritatively declare that he was "Ruhu 'l-Lah," the Spirit of God that he was not himself crucified and killed, and that he was a human being but a beloved and holy messenger of God. This was what Jesus(P) meant by justice concerning his person, mission, and transportation into heaven, and this was actually accomplished by the Apostle of Allah.

(d) The most important mark of periqlyte is that he would chastise the world on account of Judgment "because the prince of this world is to be judged"(John 16:11). The King or Prince of this world was Satan(John 12:31, 14:30), because the world was subject to him. I must draw the kind attention of my readers to the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel written in Aramaic or Babylonian dialect. There it illustrates how the "thrones"("Kursawan") and the "Judgment"("dina") were set up, and the "books"("siphirin") were opened. In Arabic, too, the word "dinu," like the Aramaic "dina," means judgment, but it is generally used to signify religion. That the Qur-an should make use of the "Dina" of Daniel as an expression of judgment and religion is more than significant. In my humble opinion this is a direct sign and evidence of the truth revealed by the same Holy Spirit or Gabriel to Daniel, Jesus(P), and Muhammad. Muhammad could not forge or fabricate this even if he were as learned a philosopher as Aristotle. The judgment described with all its majesty and glory was set up to judge the Satan in the form of the fearful fourth Beast by the Supreme Judge, the Eternal. It was then that someone appeared "like a son of man"(kbr inish) or "barnasha," who was presented to the Almighty, invested with power, honour, and kingdom for ever, and appointed to kill the Beast and to establish the Kingdom of the People of the Saints of the Most High.

Jesus(P) Christ was not appointed to destroy the Beast; he abstained from political affairs, paid tribute to Caesar, and fled away when they wanted to crown him King. He clearly declares that the Chief of this world is coming; for the Periqlyte will root out the abominable cult of idolatry. All this was accomplished by Muhammad in a few years. Islam is Kingdom and Judgment, or religion; it has the Book of Law, the Holy Al-Quran; it has God as its Supreme Judge and King, and Muhammad as its victorious hero of everlasting bliss and glory!

(e) "The last but not the least mark of the Periqlyte is that he will not speak anything of himself, but whatsoever he hears that will he speak, and he will show you the future things"(John xv. 13). There is not one iota, not a single word or comment of Muhammad or of his devoted and holy companions in the text of the glorious Qur-an. All its contents are the revealed Word of Allah. Muhammad uttered, pronounced the Word of God as he heard it read to him by the Angel Gabriel, and was reduced to writing by the faithful scribes. The words, sayings, and teachings of the Prophet, though sacred and edifying, are not the Word of God, and they are called Ahadith or Traditions.

Is he not, then, even in this description, the true Periqlyte? Can you show us another person, besides Ahmad, to possess in himself all these material, moral, and practical qualities, marks, and distinctions of Periqlyte?

No wonder Jesus(P) said: Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost; it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come(MT 12:32)

SHOCK SURVEY OF ANGLICAN BISHOPS

LONDON: More than half of England's Anglican bishops say Christians are not obliged to believe that Jesus Christ was God, according to a survey published today.

The poll of 31 of England's 39 bishops shows that many of them think that Christ's miracles, the virgin birth and the resurrection might not have happened exactly as described in the Bible.

Only 11 of the bishops insisted that Christians must regard Christ as both God and man, while 19 said it was sufficient to regard Jesus as "God's supreme agent". One declined to give a definite opinion.

The poll was carried out by London Weekend Television's weekly religion show Credo, in which Professor David Jenkins, who has been appointed the next bishop of Durham in northeast England, caused a public furor in April by expressing doubts about basic Christian doctrines.

Professor Jenkins said he did not believe the virgin birth and resurrection were historical events.

Eleven senior church-men have asked that his consecration, scheduled for July 6, be postponed until after a meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England later in July.

In the poll, 15 bishops said miracles in the New Testament were later additions to the story of Jesus.

A majority said Jesus came back from the dead, either as flesh and blood or as a spirit in human form. But nine said that the resurrection was a "series of experiences" after the death of Jesus that convinced his followers "He was alive among them".

— Sapa-AP

"DAILY NEWS" 25/6/84

DIVINITY OF JESUS

"What Jesus taught is not the important aspect of Christianity but what is important is who Jesus was" (Josh McDowell and Don Stewart: Tough Questions). According to the mainline Christianity, Jesus was a Divine personality who had come in human form; he was God incarnate. It is said that this was necessary "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (JN 3:16-17). John actually records these words as Jesus' own. One wonders if Jesus really made such a declaration then why do the other three (synoptic) Gospels or any other books of New Testament omit such an important declaration?

To start our discussion let us explain that the Greek language in which most of the New Testament was written does not have capital letters. So shorn of the special emphasis 'Son' becomes ordinary 'son'. This does not give Jesus any special status and as such the word 'only begotten' had to be added so that this was now a special type of son. We shall therefore discuss 'son' and 'only begotten' to see if these words convey any special status. This will then be followed by analysis of other words which are used by the Christians to denote Jesus' divinity.

SON OF GOD

"In the Jewish usage the term ['Son of God'] was applied to the whole Israelite people from the time of their election by God, and to individual kings from the moment of their anointing, apparently with the meaning that they had been chosen by God as his representative, and that he had adopted them, as it were, and could be relied on to give them the love and protection that a son can always expect from a father (e.g., Hos 11:1; Ex 4:22; Ps 2:7; & 89:6; 11 Sam 7:14). It is possible, though we may have no direct proof, that the term was already used in Our Lord's day as a messianic title .. On the other hand, the phrase was also current in the Hellenistic religions of the day to describe great rulers and other 'divine men', or 'spirit-filled men', whose remarkable deeds were thought to betoken a divine origin, and this usage also seems to be behind St. Mark's understanding of the term, perhaps without being completely integrated in his mind with the Jewish usage" (D.E. Nineham: St. Mark, pp. 47).

When Simon Peter said 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God' (MT 16 : 16), he was only saying that Jesus was a special person. [It is interesting that according to Mark 8:29 Peter said you are the Messiah, nothing about being a Son]. Even if Peter called him "son of God" he was not talking literally just as when Jesus said to him "You are Peter the Rock" (MT 16:18) he was not talking literally and did not mean that Peter was a piece of stone. Similarly, when Nathaniel called Jesus: 'Son of God, king of Israel' (JN 1:49) he too was not talking literally on both counts. As we are made to understand Nathanael did not know Jesus before that meeting and this entrenched monotheist Jew could not make a blasphemous declaration even as an innocent joke. No Jew would even consider making such an assertion. Both Peter and Nathanael were using the word as a general compliment, not in literal sense. When Jesus told the paralytic 'My son your sins are forgiven' (MK 2 : 5), he too was not talking literally as the paralytic was not really his son. Jesus himself is referred to as "son of David" when he is not supposed to have had a human father and, in any case, did not have David as his father, but rather as a forefather some 43 generations removed. Concerning marriage and divorce when

Jesus quoted Gen 2:24 that "for this cause shall a man cleave to his wife; and twain shall be one flesh"(MK 10:8, MT 19:5), he did not mean this to be literally "one flesh".

A few more references on "Son" are quoted below:

- Gen(6:4) The sons of God came in into daughters of men.
 Job(1:6,2:1) The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.
 1l Sam(7:14) I shall be his father and he shall be my son [Spoken about king David].
 1 Chr(22:10) He shall be my son and I will be his father [Spoken about king Solomon].
 1 Chr(28:6) It is Solomon, Your son who shall build my house and courts for I have chosen him to be my son, I will be his father.
 Ps(89:27) I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth [Spoken about king David].
 Hos(1:10) It shall be said to them Sons of the living God.
 LK(20:34-36) They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead...are the children of God, being the children of resurrection [NEB: Sons of God; the same for Deut (14:1)].
 MT(5:9) Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.
 MT(5:45) So that you may be sons of your father, who is in heaven.
 LK(3:38) Adam, the son of God.
 JN(1:12-14) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God not born of any human stock, or by the fleshly desire of a human father but the offspring of God himself.
 JN(5:1) And not for the nation only but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.
 Acts(17:28) We are indeed his offspring.
 Rom(8:14) All who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God.
 Rom(8:16) It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.
 1 Cor(6:18) I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.
 Gal(3:26) You are all sons of God.
 Gal(4:4-7) God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law in order that we might attain the status of sons, to prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the spirit of his Son crying Abba! Father! wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then heir of God through Christ.
 Ephe(1:5) And he destined us, such was his will and pleasure, to be accepted as his sons through Jesus Christ.
 Heb(7:1) This Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God. He has no father, no mother, no lineage, his years have no beginning, his life no end. He is like the Son of God; he remains a priest for all time.
 Heb(12:7) God is treating you as sons.
 Jas(1:18) Of his own free will begat he us.
 Rom(1:4) He was declared Son of God by a mighty act in that he rose from the dead.

Paul's theory according to this last quoted verse seems to be that Jesus, the man, got his special status of 'redeemer' and a special Son of God after his resurrection, when he became

Christ. This then is a different kind of relationship which cannot form the basis for assigning him divine status. Divinity is not limited to time or event.

The only occasion on which the Jews are really stated to have accused Jesus for blasphemy is at the time of his trial: "The high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. The high priest rent his clothes, and saith, what need we any further witnesses? Ye heard the blasphemy: What think ye?" (MK 14:6). According to Matthew the high priest said: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou has said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (MT 26:63-64). Thus, Mark says Jesus admitted to be the "Christ, Son of the Blessed" while Matthew says that he indirectly denied, telling the high priest that it was he who was saying that. Not committing himself, Luke says Jesus refused to answer: "Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said to them. If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am" (LK 22:67-70). Here again he does not commit himself. The latter part does not seem to be a coherent one. It is significant that when he is being accused of calling himself Son of God, Jesus calls himself "Son of Man". Actually Jesus calls himself "Son of Man" (GNB: "Mortal Man") no less than fifty one times in the New Testament.

Even if we consider Mark's version where Jesus is said to have acknowledged that he was "Christ, son of God" why was it a blasphemy when the term "son of God" is by itself not a blasphemy? The answer lies in the word "Christ" which means that the Jews were actually accusing Jesus for calling himself a Messiah (Greek: Christos, or "Christ"). They had never expected that the promised Messiah will be a Son of God in the literal sense. As such what Jesus was being accused was of falsely claiming himself to be a Messiah. The accusation goes back to the very beginning of Jesus' mission when he declared that he had come to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah (LK 4:21). Naturally "all they in the synagogue when they heard these things, were filled with wrath" (LK 5:28). He had not called himself a Son of God by this time! They were angry because he had proclaimed himself to be the promised Messiah which they did not consider him to be. Furthermore, it is unthinkable that, even if Jesus actually claimed to be a literal son of God, the high priest or any other pious Jew would ask him "Art you the Son of God?" They would have preferred to ask him "Do you call yourself to be Son of God?"

The matter is further clarified by Jesus' reply in John's Gospel: "The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I even taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why asketh thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said" (JN 18:19-21). Thus Jesus was emphasising that he had never said anything which would be considered a blasphemy by the Jews in the synagogues or in the Temple where he spoke, that he had never claimed divinity! When the Angel of God told Mary that her son would be called the "Son of the Highest" (LK 1:32), he only meant it as the Jews understood it and so did Mary understand it.

"At God's direction I have done many a miracles to help people. For which one are you killing me? They replied, Not for any good works but for blasphemy. You a mere man have declared yourself to be God. In your own law it says that men are gods! he replied. So if scripture which cannot be untrue, speaks of those as gods to whom the message of God came, do

you call it blasphemy when one sanctified and sent into the world by the Father says: I am the Son of God?" (JN 10:32-36) "Thus Jesus used a play of words to confuse his attackers. In essence he said: If in the Scriptures the word "god" can be referred to unjust human judges how much more can the name "god" refer to me? Jesus was not telling these people that humans are literally gods. Instead he was cautioning them about standing in the place of judge against him, the Son of God" (The Plain Truth magazine, February 1994, pp-11). Notwithstanding the use of capital S in the last sentence of the above quotation, Jesus clarifies that "son of God" is not used in the literal sense but as other men are included in the term, so was he. Of his own disciples Jesus said: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (JN 17:18). Clearly, disciples were not "Sons of God" on the same analogy as Jesus was not a "Son" of God, speaking literally.

Matthew mentions an incidence in Gergesenes where Jesus is confronted by two men who were possessed with devils "and behold they cried out, saying, what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of God?" (8:29). We cannot give credence to the utterance of these mad men if they really meant Jesus to be really, physically, a son of God! We get a different response at a more saner level: "But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, the Christ of God" (LK 9:20, also MK 8:29). It is significant that Peter did not call him "The son of God" even here. Obviously, Christ, or Messiah, were not to have a divine status.

Faced with such criticism modern theologians now admit that the word "Son" is not used in its literal sense but indicates a spiritual relationship. This is an admission that the "Son" is not only not the "Only Begotten" but is not even "begotten" of the Holy Ghost. This then makes all the righteous people "sons" (or daughters?) of God: "All who are led by the Holy Spirit are sons of God" (Rom 8:14). "We are indeed His offspring" (Acts 17:28).

ONLY BEGOTTEN

Once it is recognised that God has many 'sons' in the special sense of the word as used by the contemporary Jews of the time of Jesus, as also by the Greeks, Romans and many pagan cultures, the false mantle of divinity falls off the expression "Son of God" as attributed by Christians to Jesus. To give Jesus an exalted status John's Gospel (3:16-17 KJV) gives him the status of 'the only begotten son' so that while others are 'sons', Jesus was a special one. Various versions of the Bible translate this as below:

His only begotten son	KJV	NWT	RBV	
His only son	GNB	MET	NAB	
	RSV	TJB	TLB	URD
One and only one	NIV			

Note how desperately the translators are trying to establish a uniqueness that they are not willing to allow other sons of God. However, Bible itself belies such claims:

Ex(4:22)	Thus says the Lord, Israel is my first born son.
Ps(2:7)	The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.
Jere(31:9)	I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first born.

This is not confined to the Old Testament:

Rom(8:29)	For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the first born among many brothers.
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- Heb(11:17) By faith Abraham, when he was tried offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.
- 1 Jn(3:1) Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.
- 1 Jn(3:9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin for his seed remaineth in him and cannot sin, because he is born of God.

As we see even the 'only begotten son' does not signify as being the one and only — only a special one. Referring to Heb (11:17) quoted above we know that Isaac's elder brother Ishmael outlived his father so that at no time was Isaac 'the only begotten son', if taken literally.

We can thus conclude that JN(3:16) signifies no other meaning except that which was normally understood by the contemporary Jews. In any case JN(3:16) is an inconclusive claim for the divinity of Jesus especially so because it is not corroborated by any of the other Gospels, and therefore cannot be relied upon for that purpose.

FATHER, ABBA

It is claimed that Jesus' status as a special, only begotten, first born, Son of God, is reinforced by the fact that he called God as his own Father. The claim starts with Jesus' utterances quoted by Luke while Jesus was still a child of 12 years of age. His parents had brought him to Jerusalem, probably to perform the Bar Mitzvah ceremony when a Jewish child formally assumes the responsibility of being a Jew. When they left, he stayed behind apparently asking questions on the Law and discussing what was perhaps not expected from a child of his age. When reprimanded his reply was: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (LK 2:49). Obviously Jesus was not blaspheming or the Jews would have objected then and there. This was not therefore unusual. Of course, he was not calling God literally to be his father in the earthly sense. [Matthew calls him "child of the Holy Ghost" (1:18)]. We may again suffice by quoting some verses where the word "Father" has been used in other than literal sense:

- Ps(68:5) Father of the fatherless is God
- Isa(63:16) O Lord, art our father, our redeemer.
- LORD'S PRAYER Our father in heaven (MT 5:9; 11:2).
- (This prayer is supposed to have been written more than a hundred years before Jesus; every Christian is asked to call God his father).
- MT(5:48) You must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.
- MT(23:9) Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.
- LK(10:21) (Jesus:) O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.
- JN(8:14) (The Jews said) we have one Father, even God.
- JN(1:18) No one hath seen God at any time, the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him [As if neither the Father nor the Son are God].
- JN(8:14,47) God is our father and God alone ... He who has God for his father listens to the words of God.
- Acts(2:33) He received the Holy Spirit from the Father.
- Col(1:3) We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[As if God and Father are two different entities. This relationship is explained by: "For us there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ"(I Cor 8:6)].

Eph(4:5-6)

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all.

11 Thess(2:16)

Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father.

It must be pointed out that for holy men of that epoch it was not unusual to claim a special relationship with God. For example, Hanan, grandson of Honi, in Judaea, used to call God, 'Abba' (G.Vermes:Jesus The Jew; Collins,1973). For reader's interest we may state that Hanan was called 'the Circle Drawer' because he would draw a circle and refuse to come out of it until God sent rain! There were other holy men like Dositheus of Samaria as well as Hanina ben Dosa both almost contemporaries of Jesus who called God 'Abba' and no one objected nor were they assigned any kind of divinity on that account. Jaremlah had proclaimed: My father, thou art the guide of my youth(Jere 3:4). It was not meant to be literal. When Jesus said Father, Abba, he too was not saying it to be literally so. When Christians call their priests "Father" they are also not meaning it literally.

FATHER AND ME

We have shown that both in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament the terms 'son' and 'Father' have been used in other than literal sense while describing the relationship between God and his chosen, pious, people. There is no special significance attached to these words other than indicating a Creator/created relationship. Jesus does not enjoy any extraordinary (divine?) status that is not enjoyed by others to whom the word 'Son' has been applied. In this sense we all are sons/children of God. Thus, when Jesus said "I am God's Son"(JN 10:36), even if he really did say so, he was not claiming divinity.

However, it is argued that Jesus himself claimed a special relationship by calling God "My Father"! For the sake of discussion, presently we shall ignore that Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer which begins with "Our Father". Let us study some of the occasions where Jesus used this term. We must also bear in mind that in every case where this special relationship has been claimed through the utterings of Jesus himself, there are serious doubts if the words are really those of Jesus himself or were in fact introduced by the evangelists. According to "The Jesus Seminar" no more the 20% of the actual words in the New Testament which are attributed to Jesus may have actually originated with him personally and these too could be only in Aramaic. Much of the essence may have eroded in translating his words into Greek.

A common quotation put forward is JN (5:8) "... by calling God his own Father, he claimed equality with God". We must, therefore, analyse whether Jesus really did claim equality with God. We start by quoting the whole verse and other relevant verses connected with it: "Therefore the Jews sought to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God". This is John's own interpretation. As we have already shown in the preceding discussions calling God as one's Father was nothing unusual for the Jews of Jesus' times. Jesus told them: "Ye are of your father the devil"(JN 8:44). Of course he was not talking literally. Jesus himself provides the answer when he was accused of blasphemy by the Jews: Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God?"(JN(10:32-36). Thus Jesus very clearly denies any literal claim of being a 'god' or a 'Son'. Jesus was claiming to be a 'sanctified' prophet and was explaining by giving the example of Moses. "And the Lord said unto Moses, see I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be a prophet"(Ex 7:1). Earlier it was said to Moses regarding Aaron: "And he

shall be thy spokesman into the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God"(Ex 4:16). Thus either Jews were not accusing Jesus of blaspheming by calling himself a 'Son of God', or else they must have misunderstood him. It is unfortunate for Jesus that even his own disciples understood him not on many occasions(MK 4:13-14, 33, 5:40, LK 18:33, 24:41).

According to Paul Jesus did not seek equality with God: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of God (Philip 2:6-7). We are, however, not obliged to accept Paul's assessment of Jesus "being in the form of God" (rather it may well be a later addition/forgery).

JN(14:6) I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one cometh to the Father but by me. [How about: I am showing you the way. Follow Me; I will lead you to God's way?]

JN(10:38) I am in the Father and the Father in me.

JN(12:44-45) When a man believes in me, he believes in him who sent me rather than me; seeing me he sees him who sent me.

This means that I am a sign of God's existence, otherwise this would mean "I am the God and you are seeing me" in which case" me and him", a sender and sent, relationship becomes redundant. Furthermore, "No man hath seen God at any time ... the only begotten hath declared him"(JN 1:18). Since people were actually seeing Jesus, and since no one has seen God, Jesus is not God. In the same spirit:

JN(14:9-10) Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father in me.

JN(13:20) Whosoever receives anyone I send receiveth me also, and who receives me receives him who sent me.

LK(9:48) Whosoever shall receive the child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me receiveth him that sent me(This taken literally would imply a line of succession so that children would be "Grand Children of God")

The fact remains that no where in the whole New Testament there is any statement by Jesus himself claiming any status other than as subordinate to God's power. We shall discuss these under various topics hereunder.

ONE WITH FATHER

JN(10:30) "I and Father are one" (obviously means "in agreement")

JN(14:10) Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? I am not the source of the words I speak to you. (The latter clarifies the misunderstanding that arises if we quote only half of the verse).

JN(14:11) Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, else believe me for the very work's sake.(This is similar to Jesus' answer to the emissaries of John the Baptist).

JN(14:9) Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

JN(5:37) You have neither heard his voice anytime nor seen his form.

Ex(33:20) (And the Lord God said to Moses) thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live.

Jesus, who was seen and heard by multitudes, could not therefore be "Incarnation of God" in any sense. What Jesus meant was that he was the witness to the existence of God. Otherwise this would imply something unacceptable even to the Christians since taking it literally would mean that JESUS IS THE FATHER.

It is noteworthy that in his oneness with Father, Jesus does not limit it to himself but also includes his own disciples as well:

JN(17:11, 22-23) Holy Father, keep through thine name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are ... That they all may be one; as these, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

FATHER SUPERIOR

- MK(13:32) Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but my Father only [KJV omits "nor the Son", apparently because this would then be an admission by Jesus himself that "the son" was not "Omniscient"].
- MT(7:21) Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of Heaven but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father.
- JN(8:20) I have not been telling you my ideas, but have spoken what the Father has told me
- JN(14:28) Father is greater than I.
- JN(15:1) I am the real vine and my Father is the gardener.
- JN(15:10) If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.
- JN(17:9) Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.
- Acts(2:36) God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.
- Acts(3:13) God of our fathers has given the highest honours to his servant Jesus.
- II Cor(13:4): He died on the cross in weakness, but he lives by the power of God.

Although the doctrine of Trinity gives equal status to the three "Persons" Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost "there is no theologian in the Eastern or Western Church before the outbreak of the Arian Controversy [fourth century C.E.] who does not in some sense regard Son as subordinate to the Father"(R.P.C. Homer: Search for the Christian Doctrine of God). In fact Bible(NT) itself recognises Jesus as "servant" of God!

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

- JN(9:11) It is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work.
- JN(10:32) Done by my Father's power.
- MT(28:18) All power is given to me.
- LK(11:20) But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.
- LK(12:14) Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

JN(5:19-20)	Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself.
JN(5:22)	The Father does not judge anyone, but has given full jurisdiction to the Son.
JN(5:30)	I can of mine own self do nothing. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father.
JN(6:27)	God the Father has set the seal of his authority.
JN(7:28)	I am not come of myself and he that sent me is true ... I am from him, and he hath sent me.
JN(7:16)	My doctrine is not mine but his that sent me.
JN(8:28)	I do nothing on my own authority.
JN(8:10)	I have kept my Father's commandments.
JN(8:40)	I ... told you the truth which I have heard of God.
JN(8:42)	Neither came I myself, but he sent me.
JN(12:49)	I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father, who has sent me himself commanded me what to say and how to speak ... what the Father has said to me, therefore, that is what I speak.
JN(14:10)	The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.
JN(14:12)	I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall do .. [This clearly implies that Jesus' miracles were not unique].
JN(15:5)	All things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.
JN(16:15)	(The comforter) will not speak of his own authority.
JN(17:6-8)	I have made thy name known to the men who thou didst give me out of the world. They were thine, thou gavest them to me, and they have obeyed thy command. Now they know that all thy gifts have come to me from thee; for I have taught them all that I learnt from thee and they have received it, that they know with certainty that I came from thee, they have had faith to believe that thou didst send me.
Acts(2:22)	Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God.
Acts(2:33)	He received the Holy Spirit from the Father.
1 Cor(11:3)	The head of Christ is God.
1 Cor(15:27)	For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is accepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

These quotations underline the position of the Father's superior power and that the "son" acted under a delegated authority in whatever miracles he did. As stated by Paul in 1 Cor(11:5:28) quoted above Jesus was subject to God and therefore not God.

1 AM

During their sojourn in Egypt the Israelites had lost any concept of the "God of their fathers" and according to the book of Exodus, when God(or his angel) appeared to Moses in a

burning bush "Moses said unto God, behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you"(Ex 3:13-14). (In the Torah the words "I Am"(Ex 3:14) are given as "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh" translated variously as "I Am Who I Am", "I Will Be What I Will Be", "I Am" or "I Will Be" [EL-SHEDAI]. It seems an unnecessary fuss is being created about an obscure word/expression. This perhaps means simply "What does it matter what My Name is? I Am What I Am". This is followed by: "Thus shall thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your father ...". Thus immediately the tetragram YHWH, translated as "Lord God" is used wherein original "I Am" loses its importance.

The Jews were very careful about making any reference to God or giving Him any names. Thus when the high priest questioned Jesus he used the term "Son of the Blessed" rather than Son of God. It was according to the Commandments: "thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex 20:2-7).

According to KJV, Jesus was talking to the Jews and said "your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (JN 8:56-58). Thus, it is argued that by calling himself "I AM" Jesus appropriated for himself the divine title.

The Greek word for 'I AM' used here is "ego eimi". The various versions translate it as below:

GNB, KJV, MET	
NAB, NEB, NIV	I AM
RBV, RSV, TJB	
NWT	I have been
TLB	I was in existence
	[= Eternal?]

Thus we see that almost all versions, except NWT and TLB use 'I AM' to emphasise the divinity of Jesus irrespective of the literal meaning of the actual Greek word which is better conveyed by NWT and TLB translations. The reference to Jesus' divinity in these translations seems to be less than honest (deliberately misleading?). Firstly, we do not know the actual words used by Jesus in his native Aramaic. Secondly, if the writer of John's Gospel, whoever he was, intended to make Jesus use the real divine title then he would have used the actual words used in the Greek Septuagint which did exist in Jesus' own times and some two hundred years before that. Those Greek words ("HO OHN") mean "The being". However, the words used in John(8:59) are "Ego Eimi" which simply mean "I have been" or "I was(in existence)".

We may for interest note that the words "Ego Eimi" are used by Jesus at several other places in John's Gospel itself, e.g., 4:26, 13:19, 14:6; MK(14:62) etc., and no one describes this as a divine title. In fact JN(4:26) where Jesus tells the Samaritan woman "I am he" should be a strong candidate for such description. Interestingly, Paul uses this term even more forcefully: "by God's grace I am what I am"(I Cor 15:10). Yet no one says that he appropriated the divine title for himself. Surprisingly Jesus also uses "Ego Eimi Un" — I am not — in MT(14:27). If "Ego Eimi" ever had any divine connotation then "Ego Eimi Un" would be a clear denial.

If, as according to JN(8:56-58), Jesus was living before Abraham was born, it would at best indicate that Jesus had longer life than even Methuselah who lived as long as 969

years (Gen 5:27). That would be something extraordinary but would that give Jesus any attribute of divinity? At this point we may also ask as to what were Jesus' own words, not in Greek but in his own Aramaic? We wonder if Jesus really made such a fantastic claim, or is this report a twisted version of Jesus' reply in his own words in Aramaic passing from mouth to mouth, from one country to another, from one language to another. If 'I am' was to qualify as a divine title then it could be more so at MK 14:62. When asked by the high priest 'Are you the Messiah, Son of the Most Blessed?' Jesus' reply is said to be 'I am'. But no one ascribes him a divine title on this account. In any case many of Jesus' sayings, like his parables, cannot be taken literally. If we do take words in the Bible too literally then Jeremiah too would have had a pre-human existence: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jere 1:5).

According to Paul (or whoever!) "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (Heb 7:9-10). On this analogy Jesus could have claimed to be in the loins of Adam long before the time of Abraham (while Abraham too was in the loins of Adam) — "Before Abraham was I am"!

Thus, we must conclude that any attempt to use 'I am' as an argument for divinity of Jesus is misdirected and misleading.

THE MESSIAH

In a strictly literal translation 'Messiah' meant nothing more nor less than 'the anointed one'. In other words, it denoted the duly consecrated and divinely endorsed king. Every king of Israel was regarded as a Messiah. The term was habitually applied to David and to David's successors from Solomon on. "Every Jewish king of the house of David was known as Messiah, or Christ, and a regular way of referring to the High Priest was The Priest Messiah" (Maccoby: Revolution in Judaism, pp. 75). Since the king and the High Priest received their authority from God they too were holy — therefore the terms the holy king (the anointed king, king Messiah) and the holy priest (the anointed priest, priest Messiah) as were Moses and Aaron in their times. Pope is the Holy Father and empire became the Holy Roman Empire.

Not only that, about the time of Jesus' birth, a militant, armed opposition to Rome was organised and led by a man Judas of Galilee who also claimed the title of Messiah. He was recognised as such not only by his immediate followers, but also by a portion of the populace at large. His son [Manahem], in 66 C.E. returned in the state of a king to Jerusalem and, adorned with royal garments, visited the Temple to worship. Needless to say there was nothing intrinsically divine about such figures. Indeed, to assert that any man was God, or even son of God, in a literal sense would have been, for Jesus and his contemporaries, blasphemous in the extreme. "For Jesus and his contemporaries, the idea of a divine Messiah would have been utterly unthinkable" (Michael Baigent, et. al: The Messianic Legacy).

The very fact that at the trial of Jesus, the high priest asked Jesus "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" is taken to mean that the Jews understood that Jesus was really calling himself the Son of God. We have already belied this argument. Messiah, translated into Greek as Christ, means 'The Anointed One', a very special person consecrated by God. The term never implied any trait of divinity and the Jews never associated it with divinity. The High Priest was only accusing him of falsely calling himself a Messiah.

The Jews had come to expect a very special Messiah, in the line of David, to come and deliver them from their enemies and to bring back the glory of King David's kingdom. Jesus wanted the Jews to understand that he was not the one to fulfill that dream. He repeatedly told his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah (MT 9:30, 12:16, 12:20; MK 8:30, LK 5:14, etc.) lest people may have any misplaced ideas.

At various places in the Bible the word "Anointed"(Messiah, Christ) has been used for other people, as well, e.g.,

I Sam(24:6,10;26:11,16,23) (David speaks of Saul as) "the Lord's anointed"

II Sam(1:14,16)

II Chr(22:7)

Jehu the son of Nimshi whom the Lord had anointed

In ancient times when someone was made a king then the priest would "anoint" him by rubbing some consecrated oil on his head. In II Chr (23:11) it is said: "Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king". It never had any connotation of divinity. In this sense the word is applied even to Cyrus, the king of Persia: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus"(Isa 45:1).

It is worth noting that while most of the translators use the word Christ or Messiah in the case of Jesus, they invariably translate the same word as "anointed" in the case of others and thereby tend to give the impression that there is only one 'Messiah', otherwise each one of the above-quoted persons would have to be called "Messiah" which would then make it obvious that no special status was intended for Jesus and that all other Messiahs were equally special as would indeed be the case. Far from giving Jesus a divine status the word in fact places Jesus among many other mortal persons. Nearer Jesus' own time, the followers of John the Baptist used to call him the Messiah. After his death, they too pronounced him to have been raised from the dead (MK 6:14-16).

Whatever meanings we may attach to the word Messiah/Christ Jesus himself seems to have avoided its use to himself. To John the Baptist's emissaries he refers to the miracles he was performing and asks them to draw their own conclusion. To the Jews who confronted him: "How long will you keep us in suspense? ... If you are the Christ, tell us plainly"(JN 10:24) his simple answer was: "I did tell you but you do not believe. The miracles I do in Father's name speak of me"(JN 10:25). Again a reference to the miracles and the Jews were left to draw their own conclusion. If miracles were the criterion then Elisha would also be a candidate for divinity as he matched most of Jesus' miracles as well as "ascension" and expected "second coming"

There is only one place in the synoptic Gospels(MK 14:62) where Jesus is said to have acknowledged himself to be the Messiah. To the high priest's query, "Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed one?" and Jesus is quoted as saying "I am". Even here some versions of Mark's Gospel quote: "You say that I am".

There is yet another place where Jesus is quoted to have referred to himself as "Messiah"/Christ: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward"(KJV, MK 9:41). This verse is variously translated by different versions:

NAB, NIV, NWT	You belong to Christ (Messiah)
RBV, TJB, CURTLB	You are Christ's
RSV	You bear the name of Christ
NAS	Your name is followers of Christ
NEB	You are followers of the Messiah
GNB	You belong to me
MET	You are followers of mine

There are serious doubts if Jesus really said so. Indeed some of the sayings of Jesus here are said to be "rather loosely connected"(NAB). Many versions actually omit verses 44 and 46.

It is doubtful if Jesus' actual words were faithfully reported. In fact he was telling his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah (MK 8:30).

"Every serious expert admits that Jesus never asserted directly or spontaneously that he was the Messiah" (G. Vermes: *Jesus the Jew*, Collins, 1973). If he did and was indeed "the Messiah", even he would not be a divine being. No Jew in his right mind would have any such notion about the expected Messiah. If they accused him of blasphemy for calling himself a Messiah then it was because they considered him to be *falsely* calling himself to be so.

SON OF MAN

Theologians regard 'Son of Man' representing Jesus' earthly role as against 'Son of God' which denotes his divine aspect. In the New Testament Jesus used the term 'Son of man' (Hebrew: bar nasha) at least fifty one times. If anything, this is a denial of his being divine. The term was used by Ezekiel for himself and had ancient but mysterious Jewish roots.

"The expression Son of Man is used in Jewish literature in a variety of allied senses. In the prophecies of Ezekiel it means simply 'a human being'. In Psalm 8 it means man weak and insignificant, but destined for authority second only to that of God. In Psalm 80 it denotes Israel, made strong out of weakness. In the vision of Daniel, after four beasts which symbolize successive despotic empires, comes one like a Son of Man symbolizing (corporately) the saints of the Most High to whom God is about to entrust his judgment and kingdom" (G.B. Caird; *St. Luke*; Penguin, 1963). However, it is significant that throughout Jewish history the term 'Son of Man' was never equated with the term "Messiah". Although the term 'Son of Man' did have certain super-natural connotations, there was never even a remote suggestion of any divine connection. GNB translates it as "mortal man".

HOLY

The Angel is supposed to have told Mary, the mother of Jesus: "The child to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God" (LK 1:35). This itself does not give any special status to Jesus since "Every first born male shall be called holy to the Lord" (Ex 13:2,12; LK 2:23), "He who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy" (Isa 4:3).

LORD

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you. Then saith he unto Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach here thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and My God" (JN 20:26-28). Even if Thomas called Lord as well as God is of no importance. That is his opinion. The term was, however, being used for the Roman Emperor at the time John was writing his Gospel and, not to be left behind, he appropriates that title for Jesus as well. If the Roman Emperor did not become divine, neither would Jesus even if Thomas did blurt out that same title. No one else seems to have called him God or else it would have been mentioned somewhere in the Gospels. Not even John assigns this title to Jesus elsewhere in his Gospel. The title 'Lord' has however, been used many a times and this is what we shall analyse.

According to Paul: "for though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we

by him"(1 Cor 8:5-6). "God the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord"(1 Tim 1:2). Thus he makes a clear distinction between God and Lord.

His ordinary disciples called him "Lord". They were all Jews and they would not in their wildest dreams have thought that the word "Lord" would in any way be misconstrued as "God". They only meant "Master" by this word. See, for example MT (8:19) wherein one person calls him "Master" yet another calls him "Lord" in MT(8:21).

Jesus himself is said to have called himself 'Lord': "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"(LK 6:46). Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father"(MT 7:2). Interestingly, "Sara obeyed Abraham calling him lord"(1 Pet 3:6)). Yet no one assigns any divine attribute to Abraham on that account. Since Greek language does not have any capital letters, the deceit of translators in writing 'lord' here instead of Lord as everywhere else for Jesus, is apparent. They simply want to make deliberate uncalled forth distinction between application of this word to Jesus and others.

People other than Jesus are also called "Lord" e.g. MT(25:11) wherein "the virgins" call "Lord, Lord" to the bridegroom. Jesus himself uses the word in MT(24:45) for ordinary mortals: "Who then is faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household ... Blessed is the servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing .. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming .. that lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him.

Jude(4): denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude(21): Keeping yourself in the love of God, Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"God" is clearly a distinctly separate entity from Jesus, the Christ, who is not even called a "son" in the whole of the Epistle of Jude. "Lord" is being used merely as a sign of reverence.

In any case it cannot be proved that the word Lord (actually, lord) has any divine connotations otherwise the House of Lords of the United Kingdom would be full of Gods! The Greek word for Lord is KYRIOS which means 'sir' and that is what it is used for. In actual fact in most cases what has been translated as "Lord" for God it is a translation of the words "Jehovah" and "Elohim". Clearly even Christians will not ascribe these names to Jesus himself.

VIRGIN BIRTH.

"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou has found favour with God. And, behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.....The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"(LK 1:30-35). Christians maintain that Jesus' virgin birth without a father is the proof of his divine origin. This argument overlooks creation of Adam, without father or mother. God did not have to resort to bringing a clean thing out of an unclean thing: "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"(Job 25:4). Also, according to John(3:6) "That which is born of flesh is flesh". They also overlook the case of Melchizedek "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God....(Heb 7:3)

something better than Jesus? Or, a misplaced exhalation by Paul? Let the Christians decide for themselves.

THE WORD:

JN(1:1): "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God".

If the "word" was with God then it could not be God Himself. But John reiterates that the word was God. Well, it is John's word which we are not obliged to accept as being without any authority or basis for his high thinking. In any case, if the Word was God then where is the Father and why has John left out the Holy Spirit? Was the spirit of God missing in the beginning? This is for the Trinitarians to ponder about. Unitarian writers of the early church often accused the Trinitarians to have altered the verse JN 1:1 in their texts. They maintained that it actually read as: "In the beginning was the Word; and the word was with God; and the word was God's". The change had occurred by corrupting the Greek word Theos(God's) into "Theou"(God). In the Unitarian sense the clause "In the beginning was the word" expressly indicates the origin of the word which was not before the beginning. Word of God does not mean a separate and distinct substance, coeval and co-existent with the Almighty but an expression and proclamation of His knowledge and will at the time He decided to create: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"(Gen 1:1).

In Jesus' last discourse John makes him say "And now, Father, glorify these with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"(JN 17:5,24). These verses may indicate that Father loved Jesus before even he created this world and man Jesus with it. (God being Omniscient) yet it does not entitle Jesus to equality with God or to his uncreated pre-existence.

GOOD

"A rich young man ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees before the Lord, Good teacher, he asked What must I do to inherit eternal life. Why do you call me good? Jesus answered, No one is good, except God alone"(MK 10:17-18).

"This question confronted the man's understanding of who Christ was. In essence, a part of Jesus' reply was: since only God is good, does this mean that you acknowledge me for what I am — God in flesh?"(The Plain Truth, July 1994, pp.19).

The above quotation demonstrates the illogical, fallacious, twists given to Jesus' hearsay (so-called spoken) words conveyed to us by persons whose identity is at best uncertain. The purpose is to somehow make us believe that the man of flesh Jesus was actually the God in flesh, albeit one of the three persons within the one person God-head. This type of circular argument is like saying that "since something is better than nothing and nothing is better than God, therefore something is better than God"!

Jesus' above-quoted words in fact mean nothing more than what is plain: God alone is (perfectly) good and we are but servants of God. Jesus himself never gave any hint of being divine. He was in fact denying that he himself was (perfectly) good — why call *me* good? — and since God alone is (perfectly) good, therefore Jesus totally dissociated himself from any hint of being divine which attribute was neither accepted nor assigned by the rich young man, nor understood that way by Jesus, nor anyone around him. The young man addressed him as "Good teacher" and Jesus after accepting the title "teacher" (Rabbi) did not want to be called "good" in his own humility.

PREDICTED IN THE 'SCRIPTURES'

Under Paul's tutelage gospel writers searched for verses in the Old Testament to find hidden meanings to match anything that remotely resembled something that happened to Jesus. We shall not describe these prophecies here as some of these have already been discussed in earlier chapters and some more will be discussed later. Suffice it to say that their ingenuity would have linked the English national anthem to II Chr (23:11) where Jehoida, after anointing the king, said: "God save the king".

In the book 'Basic Bible Doctrines' a number of arguments are given why Jesus, the Son of God, was to come for delivering the world. We shall mention these reasons with counter comments:

ARGUMENTS	COMMENTS
1. One day a Deliverer, a King, Messiah would come.	1. Was Jesus so accepted? Did he become a King? Did he "deliver" the Jewish nation? None of titles denote divinity anyway.
2. When Adam and Eve fell into sin God had to judge the world but he also promised that "seed of the woman" (itself at least a hint of the Virgin Birth) would crush the enemy (Gen 3:15).	2. This was to be a curse on both the woman and her "seed" not a blessing! Anyway, we have already exposed the myth of the story of 'Virgin Birth' in the manner it is recorded in the New Testament.
3. The Deliverer would be a man born to a human mother.	3. All human beings are born to human mothers. John the Baptist can also qualify as such.
4. The Deliverer who would bring blessings to all men would be one of Abraham's descendants (Gen 22:18).	4. Muslims claim that this was their holy prophet Muhammad (Blessing and peace be upon him). How do we decide?
5. The promise was passed on to Issac (Gen 26:4) and to Jacob (Gen 28:14), later to Judah (Gen 49:10)	5. Jesus said: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (MT 21:43). Thus Christ, the King, could not sit on David's throne for ever and ever. This is in accord with (Gen 49:10): "The scepter shall not depart from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Muslims claim that their holy prophet (Blessing and peace be upon him) was the one to whom the sceptre passed on. He was the new law-giver after Moses! Jesus did not fulfil the requirement.
6. A prophet like Moses	6. There are many reasons why Jesus was not 'like Moses'. See Appendix III.
7. A priest like Melchizedek	7. In what sense? We know precious little about Melchizedek anyway.
8. A King in the line of David	8. Which he never became!

The so-called 'predictions' would fit many, but one would have to stretch some of them too far to fit Jesus. Oddly, there is no mention in the Scriptures that the Messiah will be

"crucified". Many of the so-called predictions of suffering would also fit the criminals who were crucified by his side. Some of the predictions are actually "fitted" by the evangelists to the events.

We have already pointed out that the 'Scriptures' themselves in their present form have no divine authority. To claim divinity for Jesus on the basis of these documents, when Jesus himself did not claim it, is stretching things too far.

St. Augustine, an early church father, when confronted with such arguments conceded that Jesus was not actually mentioned in the Old Testament but added that he was obviously meant. It needs unreasonably blind faith to accept such an argument.

LAMB OF GOD

When Abraham offered his son Isaac (or was it in fact Ishmael?) for a burnt offering an angel of the Lord brought a ram which Abraham sacrificed "in the stead of his son" (Gen 22:13).

God brought a number of plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptian people when Pharaoh refused to let the Israeli people go free. Then God told Moses that now all the first born of every man and beast in Egypt shall die. The Israeli people were, however, required to sacrifice an unblemished lamb for each household and pour its blood on their door posts, thresholds and lintels of the doors. They were to eat the roast of the sacrificial lamb with an unleavened bread. "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover" (Ex 12:27). This act redeemed all the first born of the children of Israel.

According to the Christian faith Jesus acted as God's lamb for the redemption of the sins of mankind through his sacrifice on the Cross. This overlooks the fact that if God really needed a human sacrifice then he would not have provided replacement for Isaac (Ishmael?). The whole idea of human sacrifice is pagan. In any case it was not a willing Lamb of God who cried "My God, My God, why have thou forsaken me?" (MK 15:34; MT 27:46).

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves; This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house and he arose, and departed to his house" (MT 9:2-7, also MK 2:3-12).

The fact that the Jews thought that this was a blasphemy seems to endorse the view that Jesus claimed that he could forgive sins. Thus, according to the Christians, Jesus was divine because only God can forgive sins. However, before jumping to blind conclusions, let us read the very next verse: "When the people saw it, they were afraid, and praised God for giving such authority to men" (MT 9:8). This shows that people around him never thought that by forgiving sins he was taking on a mantle of divinity. They knew that the authority to do so was given to Jesus (and to similar other holy men of Jesus' own time) by God. According to Jesus himself: "verily, verily, I say unto you, the son can do nothing of himself" (JN 14:12). "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (JN 14:12). Jesus emphasised that this was not unique to him: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also and greater works

than these shall he do"(JN 14:12). Interestingly even according to Matthew "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins", not in the heaven!

We now consider the story of the woman of ill-repute who anointed and kissed Jesus' feet "And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven"(LK 7:48). Naturally those present "began to say within themselves, who is it that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace"(LK 7:49-50). In this story the Jews do not even think that Jesus was saying something wrong. But, rather, they were wondering about him as to who he was and what authority did he have to forgive sins. If he did have that authority then it could only be from God Himself as explained above. This delegated authority did not make the delegate himself divine.

In both the above-cited cases Jesus defends his actions. During his days the sins were considered to be the source of all trouble, including physical trouble. Even the nation of Israel had endured suffering because of its sins. Whenever it was good fortune it was because their acts pleased God. After curing the man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus tells him: "sin no more, lest a worst thing come unto thee"(JN 5:14).

MIRACLES AND PROPHECIES

When Jesus is said to have brought the widow's son back to life "there came a fear on all and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people"(LK 7:16, KJV)

GNB	God has come to save people;
MET	God has turned his face toward his people;
NAB	God has visited his people;
NEB	God has shown his care for his people;
NIV	God has come to help his people;
NWT	God has turned his attention to his people;
RBV	God has cared for his people;
TJB	God has visited his people;
TLB	We have seen the hand of God at work today;
URD	God has turned his attention to his people.

In the above listings the deceit of many of the translators is apparent. The real meaning of the sentence is "God has shown his care" or something equivalent, so that people considered that by sending such a prophet God had sent his blessings to the people. That is glory to God, not to Jesus. People recognised Jesus as a 'prophet'! They did not call him 'God' who had visited them.

"And the disciples of John showed him of all these things. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?.....Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached"(LK 7:18-19,22). He did not claim divinity, just cited the miracles. "A miracle is by definition an event that is unique and without a precedent"(Josh McDowell and Don Stewart: Answers to Tough Questions). None of the miracles assigned to Jesus would fall in this category as many others had performed such miracles before him. If miracles conferred divinity then Elijah and Elisha and many other prophets should be treated at the same level. Same for various prophecies. Jesus had authorised his twelve disciples to "raise the dead"(MT 10:8) Peter is said to have raised a

woman(Acts 9:40). They may have done it with powers granted by Jesus. Jesus too was doing his miracles by the power of God(JN 10:32), by Father's gift(JN 5:26, NEB). There were prophets abound all over Palestine. Were they too gods (with a big G)?

RESURRECTED

Resurrection of Jesus is the basis of Christian faith: "If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen....if Christ be not raised your faith is vain"(1 Cor 15: 12-13, 16). "In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was brought to life and in the spirit he went"(1 Pet 3:18-19). DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?

JN(16:10) I am going to the Father and you will not see me anymore.

JN(16:13) When,however, the spirit comes who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth.

JN(16:16) In a little while you will not see me any more, and then a little later you will see me.

MT(22:29-30) At resurrection men and women do not marry, they are like angels in heaven.[Angels and spirits do not eat, how come Jesus kept eating after the so-called resurrection?]

Acts(10:41) Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to his.

[Did they see a "resurrected" Jesus or Jesus who had not been crucified in the first place?].

If Jesus indeed died on the Cross and was really, actually, raised back to life would that entitle him to the title of divinity? Jesus himself raised people to life: Jairus' daughter(MK 5:42, MT 9:26, LK 8:52), Widow's son(LK 7:15), Lazarus(JN 11:44). At the time of Jesus' reported crucifixion "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose. And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into holy city, and appeared into many"(MT 27:52-53). It is possible that Elijah/Elias too may have revisited the world as stated by none other but Jesus himself: "Elias is already come"(MK 9:13, MT 17:12). Jesus further confirms that "John is Elijah"(GNB: MT 11:14). We have already noted that there were other incidences of people having been resurrected(See Ch. XII). We even have a case of a dead person coming to life merely by his dead body coming in contact with Elisha's bones in the sepulchre(II Kg 13:21). None of them attained divinity. If people can raise the dead, if God can raise the saints, if God can incarnate Elijah/Elias into John, so if God in His Omnipotence also raised Jesus, then glory be to God. Why should Jesus become divine?

As we have already discussed those who were raised from the dead previous to Jesus, were so raised even by men, e.g. by Elijah. Even Peter and Paul are credited with raising of the dead(Acts 9:36-41,20:9-10). Ezekiel in fact made dry bones to live again(Ezc, Ch 37)! In all these situations Jesus is in good company with others who were resurrected but are never assigned any divine attribute.

11 Cor(1:9) Why we felt that we had received the sentence of death but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who arises the dead.

Acts(13:33) Instead of quickening the dead Jesus himself met with death and God raised him to life.

As for himself Jesus explained "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge...I seek not my own will but the will of the Father"(JN 5:30). He had no power on life or death, except whatever was delegated to him through the will and power of God!

OR WAS IT AN AFTERTHOUGHT OR A MISUNDERSTANDING?

Rom(1:4) He was declared Son of God by a mighty act in that he rose from the dead, [This would mean that Jesus was NOT a Son of God, whatever that means, before resurrection!]

Even if Jesus was raised from the dead, would that give him the right to divinity? If he did it by his own power then it might be something to think about. But if Jesus was raised from the dead by God the Father, then the credit should go not to Jesus but to the One who raised him.

ASCENSION

There is precious little in the four Gospels about Jesus' ascension to heaven. Mark's rendition(16:19) is now universally acknowledged to be a later addition [forgery!]. Matthew and John make no mention of ascension. Luke says "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven"(24:51). According to Luke's second version recorded in the Acts(1:9) "he was taken up: and a cloud received him out of their sight". Even Paul is not explicit in any of his Epistles. Indeed Jesus ascended to heaven, would that make him "God"? In the Old Testament we have been told how the prophet Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven and he did not even have to die before doing that(II Kg 2:11). In the New Testament "Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip"(Acts 8:39). Angels keep coming and going. There have been others who are also supposed to have ascended: Enoch and Ezra are also supposed to have ascended to heaven without even having to die first as in the case of Jesus:

Gen(5:24): And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Heb(11:5): By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

II Kg(2:11): And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

II Esd(14:9): You shall be taken up from among men, and henceforth you shall be with my Son and with those who are like you, until the times are ended.

II Esd(14:ending with Syriac, Ethiopic and Arabic MSS): "At that time Ezra was caught up, and taken to the places of those who are like him.

None of these are accorded any attribute of divinity. Why should Jesus become divine just because God decided to take him up temporarily? [Jesus is also expected to return!].

THE GOD-MAN

According to the Christian doctrine Jesus had both a human and a divine nature. Jesus Christ was just like all men in every important points except sin. This human nature was acquired from being born of a woman; the Omnipotent, Son of God could become man if he wanted to; in becoming a man, the Son of God did not give up any of his divine attributes; he just laid aside the manifestation of his glory and the independent use of his attributes while he was living on this earth as a man. He did not shed his divinity, he just "emptied himself"(Phil 2:7). Thus when we say that Jesus did not have attributes of God, Christian doctrinaires quote

mostly what people wrote about Jesus. They also quote certain verses from the Old Testament, e.g. Isaiah(9:6-7) "Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace", to show that the Messiah was to be a God. When it is pointed out that the Jews never understood it that way, their answer is that the Jews mis-understood the scriptures, and so the argument goes on. Later Jesus' constant companions, his disciples, also did not understand the obvious. It seems only Paul is the one who unravelled the mystery.

The fact is that Jesus never claimed himself to be divine. However, human beings gave him that status after he went away (ascended to heaven?) But men have given the status of diety to mere humans since times immemorial. When Paul cured a leper at Lystra and when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycania, the gods are come down to us in the likeness of man(Acts 14:11). No wonder some people thought Jesus too was a god-man with all those miracles and healing to his credit !

CHRIST, THE KING

Mic(5:2): "But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings have been from of old, from everlasting"(KJV). There seems to have been a deliberate attempt not only in KJV but also in RBV as well as in TLB to give the impression that the one to come will be a "ruler" whose origin is "from everlasting", divine. Similar impression is once again given in MT(2:6) where the Messiah is stated to be a "Governor"(Other modern versions(GNB, NAB, RSV TJB) record that the "ruler" will be from ancient times, thus dispelling the idea of eternity, timelessness and divinity.

The Magi asking for the new born child asked for the "king of the Jews"(MT 2:2). Interestingly they are stated to have asked this of Herod the king himself! Anna, the prophetess, "spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem"(LK 2:38). Gospel writers, keep us reminding that the Messiah will be a king. Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' descent (through variant lines) to King David. In fact, Matthew forthrightly states "Jesus, son of David" in the very opening line of his Gospel.

Nathaniel, on seeing Jesus, called him "Son of God, king of Israel"(Jn 1:49). "Jesus therefore perceiving that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone"(JN 6:15). Thus Jesus did not want to give any impression that he was, or to be, a king. Yet, he rode into Jerusalem in the manner of Jewish kings, "In accordance with the text of the Scripture": Fear no more daughter of Zion, see, your king is coming, mounted on ass's colt"(JN 12:15). This is a reference from Zechariah(9:9): "Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion, shout, Daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass". "He was now close to Jerusalem and they thought the reign of God might dawn at any time" (LK 19:11). And Pilate is said to have written a sign saying "King of the Jews" in three languages! The two on road to Emmaus exclaimed: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"(LK 24:21). But rather than become a king, he was arrested, tried, mocked at, whipped, crowned with thorns, crucified.

His simpleton disciples did not lose hope even after his crucifixion and asked the "resurrected" Jesus: "Lord, will thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?"(Acts 1:6). Unfortunately, this expectation of a royal Messiah conquering the Gentiles and restoring the glory died with Jesus' supposed crucifixion, and evn his "resurrection" did not revive that hope. So Jesus' answer to the above query is an attempt by Luke to keep that hope kindled. 'It is not for you to know the time(Acts 1:7). So Jesus must come back to be a "King". Unfortunately for the Gentiles, he will come only for "restoring the kingdom of Israel"!

Jacob had told his sons: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be"(Gen 49:10). Jesus said: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"(MT 21:43). Who shall that nation be?. This is yet another topic that need be taken up elsewhere.

In this connection let us point out that we are aware that Jesus is stated to have said that his kingdom was not of this world(JN 18:36). That tantamounts to his denial of any claim to the throne of David, as a root of Jesse, as the earthly hope of Israel, indeed his very role as "the Messiah".

PERFECT AND SINLESS

Even though Paul declared that "all have sinned and fallen in grace"(Rom 3:33)Jesus is said to have been perfect and sinless. That may make him unique but would this necessarily follow that he was "Son of God"? Such presumption would be compatible with the alternate such as he being son of a lesser god. Better still could he not be made more perfect and sinless by the loving God as a shining example to be imitated by the human kind?

On the other hand it could also be argued that given the accounts of some of the speeches and action of Jesus — his outrages and woes(MT 16:3-4, 23:13-33; LK 10:13,15; JN 2:15), his exhortation to his disciples to carry swords(LK 22:36)and kill his enemies(LK 19:27), rebuking his own mother(MT 12:48; JN 2:3-4), his associating with Jews only(MT10:5-6, 15:22-6)etc., even the New Testament does not depict him as a perfect person. Actually Jesus himself is made to profess that only after "the third day (after crucifixion) I shall be perfected"(LK 13:32).

NO CORRUPTION

"For David after he had served his own generation by the will of God fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption"(Acts 13:36-37).

Paul's above assertion ignores the fact that everyone is expected to "rise again" abeit on the Day of Judgement/Last Day(JN 11:24). The criterion for "not corrupted" would then rest on the length of time one has to spend in death before the body is to be considered "corrupted". Saints came out of their graves after Jesus' crucifixion(MT27:53), Lazarus was in his grave four days(JN 11:17) — Were they corrupted during their period of "death"? Jesus went down to hell "for three days and night". Narrow it down to "one day and night" or "two nights and a day", or any way you may like to look at it, was this not sufficient to be corrupted? Consider the short period of death for the others whom Jesus brought to life while they were not even buried. Consider that "the day of the Lord comes like a thief"(I Thess 14:13-14); there will be billions of people on earth instantly available for resurrection to face divine judgment. Will they all qualify for being "not corrupted"? Will Jesus stay on the right hand of God in his body of flesh or would he need to shed this earthly body on his second coming — in which case his mortal body will undergo the same corruption as the rest of us? It is a matter of time.

SAVIOUR

Because of the Original Sin, it is stated that the man needs to be saved. The two verses, having the same text, often quoted are: "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish"(LK 6:3,5). This does not seem to have anything to do with the so-called Original Sin. In any case,

according to these verses to be saved one only needs to "Repent". No need for someone else to help him to save himself. Yet, Christians claim that we need a Saviour to save us. In trying to prove that Jesus was no other than God, they make a fallacious circular argument: since God is the only Saviour, Jesus must be God, because he is a Saviour.

According to Josh McDowell and Don Stewart (Answers to Tough Questions, pp.62-64): Through the Original Sin the bonds between man and God and between man and nature were broken. "However God promised to make all these things right and gave His word that He would send a Saviour, a Messiah, who would deliver the entire creation from the bondage of sin". According to KJV God's original message was: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". Nothing about being saved or any Saviour. Even so, the authors claim that "The Old Testament kept repeating the theme that some day this person would come into the world and set mankind free. "God's word did indeed come true. God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ(JN 1:14,29)". If John said so then it does not mean that it really happened this way, we have no reason to take John's word for it especially when his own identity is doubtful at best. Furthermore, if at all so, the Old Testament "Messiah" was for the earthly salvation of the Jewish nation only(JN 4:22), not for the whole mankind, let alone the whole creation.

"There is only one who can save"(William MacDonald: Thy Word Is Truth) and in evidence John (14:6) is quoted: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". Did Jesus really say that? If he did then what were his actual words? What did he mean by that? For those who do not have blind faith these words do not tell about Jesus being the only Saviour for it all seems to convey the message "Follow me and my teachings", nothing more than that!

We keep wondering as to where does a "Saviour" come in all this! Doctrinaires, however, cite verses from Isaiah: "Israel fear not: for I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine I am the Lord thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour. I, even I, am the Lord: and beside me there is no saviour"(Isa 43: 1,3,11). To Mary, mother of Jesus is attributed the statement: "God my Saviour"(LK 1:14). There is no reference to Jesus being Saviour.

It is argued that by shedding his blood Jesus purchased redemption for sinners. If Jesus is in reality God then why did he have to pay for anything that was within his power to grant anyway? Is not the Son himself God (according to Christian belief)? Is God not Merciful besides being Just?

The point of calling Jesus "Saviour" is to make him divine, Jesus must be God because God is the Saviour(LK 1:47). But this is to overlook the evidence within the Bible itself that there have been other "saviours" besides Jesus, and they were not "God", not even "gods", e.g., "Jehoahaz... the Lord gave Israel a Saviour"(II Kg 13:5). Similar references are given in Nehemiah(9:27) and Obadiah(21) where "saviours" are mentioned. However we should note that various versions translate the word "saviours" differently:

VERSION	II KINGS 13:15	NEHEMIAH (9:27)	OBADIAH(21)
GNB	leader	leaders	leaders
KJV	saviour	saviours	saviours
NAB	Old version: saviour New Version: Deliverer	saviours deliverers	saviours deliverers
NAS	deliverer	deliverers	deliverers
NIV	deliverers	deliverers	deliverers

NKJ	deliverer	deliverer	saviours
NWT	saviours	saviours	saviours
RBV	"so the lord delivered" (Israel)	saviours	saviours
RSV	savior	saviors	saviors
TJB	saviors	saviors	victorious
TLB	leaders	saviours	deliverers

Apparently deliberate attempts have been made for giving the impression that Jesus is the one and only Saviour, while Bible itself talks of other saviours as well! For example, even in the New Testament Moses has been called a deliverer (Acts 7:35). In the Old Testament even lesser persons have delivered Israel: "But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Geru, a Benjamite, a left-handed man" (Judg 3:9).

The question also arises that if Jesus was to be the saviour of those who were to believe in him, then what about all those generations of mankind who had been there before he came into this world before him? What about all those prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament? Since "salvation is of the Jews" only, and even then a "remnant shall be saved" (Isa 10:22-23, Rom 9:27), then who will save the rest of God's creation?

I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no saviour (Isa 43:11).

MEDIATOR

According to Paul: "There is One God and One Mediator between God and man: the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).

A Mediator/Intercessor is the one who pleads on behalf of another — an Advocate. Thus if Jesus is to be a Mediator/Intercessor/Advocate between God and "Men" then he is neither God, nor 'of men' which is a strange situation even for the Christians who consider him "fully God and fully human".

Anyway, why does the mankind need a Mediator? It is stated that because of the guilt of the "Original Sin" of Adam and Eve which is inherited by the humankind "Man is in a state of ruin or destruction and under condemnation, in a fallen state, cast down from favour and fellowship of God". In support of this Isaiah (59:2) is quoted: "But your iniquities have separated you from God. Your sins have hidden His face from you, so He will not hear". Interestingly Isaiah said this of the Israelites living in his own time — nothing to do with the "Original Sin". Again, Paul is quoted: "All have sinned and (therefore) come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). This obviously goes beyond the "Original Sin".

The remedy suggested for nearness to God is that "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22). By shedding his blood on the Cross Jesus is stated to have earned forgiveness for our sins. Then we may ask: are our sins forgiven? The answer is: "No", our sins will be forgiven when Jesus mediates/intercedes/advocates on our behalf. However, it seems that even then "a remnant shall be saved" (Isa 10:22, Rom 9:27). What a waste;

We are told that "the soul that sinneth must die" (Eze 18:20) and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). That seems like a hopeless situation. However, even if the wages of sin was death, only the soul that sinneth should die:

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes,

and do which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath he shall live" (Eze 18:20-22).

No more "Original Sin" inherited by humankind, no need for a propitiatory sacrifice, no need for God to incarnate Himself, no need for a Mediator!

Jesus said: "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father, which is in heaven" (MT 7:21). "The worshipers once purged should have no conscience of sin" (Heb 10:2). "For if we sin willfully... there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" (Heb 10:26). Thus, "sacrifice" is not needed by the righteous and is no avail to the sinners. Jesus said: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call righteous, but sinners to repentance" (MT 9:12-13).

The idea of mediation/intercession is grounded in the pagan concept that God is Just and must punish and cannot be Merciful until goaded by the Mediator/Intercessor. Thus while He can punish, He cannot forgive unless persuaded by the Mediator.

However the Merciful God is not pleased to punish people: "have I pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live" (Eze 18:23). Only when we turn away from wickedness and be righteous shall the society be at peace with itself. Peace on earth depends on goodwill toward all. The kingdom of God is based on compliance with God's laws. No mediator/intercessor is needed. That is why John the Baptist as well as Jesus declared: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (MT 3:2, MK 1:15). Human salvation lies in repentance and righteousness on the part of mankind and God's forgiveness and Mercy for our trespasses: "For in making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind" (Rom 11:32). No Mediator/Intercessor/Advocate is needed.

At the time the "risen" Jesus appeared to his disciples behind closed doors he told them "whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever ye retain, they are retained" (JN 20:23). No Mediator is required. Even before he was crucified he and his disciples had been baptising for remission of sins. In fact he had been preaching "If a man keep my saying he shall never taste death" (Jn 8:48-49). No Mediator is required.

Interestingly, in his farewell discourse Jesus is reported to have told his disciples: "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter (NEB: Advocate) that he may be with you for ever" (JN 14:16). Christians say this was to be the Holy Ghost. Whoever it/he may be this negates the idea of Jesus being the only Advocate.

JESUS AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINITY

According to Article 11 of the "Articles of Religion" of the Church of England: "The Son, which is the word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect nature, that is to say, the Godhead never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man". Not easily understood by most people, rather confusing! Perhaps it is meant to be so.

In order to be a divine, Jesus must possess all the attributes (without any exception) of the Divine Being. We must therefore explore at least some of the attributes and see if Jesus indeed possessed these, keeping in mind the term "Very God, Very Man" so that at no time he was dispossessed of any of the divine attributes. Even if he was performing his functions as a

'Man' it does not mean that at any time he had shed off his divinity, otherwise at least for that moment he was not both which is then a contradiction of the Article stated above.

I. **God is Eternal:** "Who alone has immortality(I Tim 6:16). Jesus died on the Cross (according to the Christians) or he died a natural death. If he 'ascended' to heaven he must return to shed his mortal body of flesh. Even if he did not die(Gospel of Barnabas) he must return to die in order to shed his human body. He could not, therefore, be divine.

II. **God is not begotten:** Jesus was begotten even though claimed to be through divine intervention. Even if it is claimed that he had no (human) father, there is no denial of the fact that he did have a mother. If he was really a 'God' then he need not to have had even a mother. It would not be against what Bible tells us of "Melchizedec, King of Salem, priest of the Most High God ... without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life but made like unto the Son of God ..." (Heb 7:1-3). Assuming that Melchizedec's case is a blatant exaggeration, we have the case of Adam's creation which does not look odd to Jews, Christians as well as Muslims all over the world. If a mere (human) 'man' could be like that then why not Jesus? Why did Jesus have to be begotten if he was divine?

Interestingly even though Jesus is said to be the Son of God, Luke records the angel telling Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee"(1:35), which makes Jesus the Son of the Holy Ghost(MT 1:18).

Son-ship and divinity are mutually exclusive. To be a son means lower in status subordinate to the father, or at least coming after the father. To be divine means to be no one's son. God creates and is not himself created.

Isa(42:5) Thus saith God thy Lord, who created heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it.

III. **God is not slain:** The slain, therefore, is not God: "Will thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee"(Eze 28:9). "The God of our fathers raised Jesus who you killed by hanging on a tree"(Acts 5:30).

IV. **God is Unique:** He is ONE and only. There is nothing like him.

Isa(44:6) Thus saith the Lord ... I am the first and I am the last, besides me there is no God.

Isa(45:21-23) There is no God besides Me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides Me ... for I am God, and there is no other I have sworn by Myself.

Isa(46:9-10) I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like Me declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done.

Job(38:4) Where were you when I laid the foundation of earth? Tell Me if you have understanding.

MK(12:29) The Lord our God is the only Lord.

MK(12:34) God is one and beside him there is no other.

LK(4:8) Jesus answered him: Scripture says, you shall do homage to the Lord your God and worship him alone. [He did not demand his own worship].

LK(18:19) No one is good except God alone.

JN(5:44)	Who alone is God.
JN(8:41-42)	God is our Father and God alone.
Rom(3:29)	God is one.
1 Cor(8:4)	There is none other God but one.

Jesus does not qualify to be God because he was not unique. Having been born of a woman he was like one of us. According to Christian belief he fulfilled the prophecy of Moses: "Lord your God will send you a prophet, just as he sent me ..." (Acts 3:22). The original prophecy was thus: "A prophet from your own midst, from your brothers, like me, is what Jehovah your God will raise up to you ..." (Deut 17:15). If Jesus was like Moses then he was not unique. Even if he was not like Moses in certain aspects, he was like all of us, a human. [Also see Appendix III]

II Tim(2:5) For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and mankind together, the man, Jesus Christ ...

Ex(20:2-3) I am the Lord thy God ... thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Lev(19:2) I the Lord your God am holy.

Lev(19:13, 25, 31, 34, 36, 20:7, etc.) I am the Lord your God.

Lev(19:14, 18, etc.) I am the Lord.

MK(12:28-32) also MT (22:34-40) : And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandment is, Hear, O Israel : The Lord our God is one Lord : And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God; and there is none other but He." Here was then an opportunity for Jesus to disclose his divinity. Yet he did not. Yet Christians assign partners to God our Lord, besides whom there is none!

V. **God is Spirit:** Jesus said "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (JN 4:24). Jesus also said: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have" (LJ 24:39). Jesus is, therefore not God by his own admission.

VI. **God is Omnipotent:** He is above all, superior to everyone. None is greater than Him. For with God nothing shall be impossible LK(1:37). Jesus was not omnipotent:

MK(6:5) And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people

MK(10:18) And Jesus said to him, why do you call me good ? No one is good but God alone, and healed them.

MK(10:40), MT(20:23) To sit at my right hand or left is not for me to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.

JN(5:30) I can do nothing on my own authority, as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me.

JN(8:29) (Jesus said) : I always do what is pleasing to Him.

JN(14:28) Father is greater than I.

1 Cor(11:3) Head of Christ is God.

VII. **God is Omniscient:** He is All-Aware of the seen and the unseen. He knows everything and about everything. Jesus did not have this quality.

- 1 Kg(8:39) He has the knowledge of earth and all that is created.
- MK(13:32) But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, only the Father. (Those who make difference between Jesus the man and Jesus the Son of God should particularly note that here even the "Son of God" lacks knowledge; he is thus not equal to "Father")
- MT(19:28) Truly I say to you, in the new world when the Son of Man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones; judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Yet Judas Iscariot is reported to have betrayed him. 'Judging of twelve tribes' also underlines the fact that Jesus the Jew had come for the Jews only).
- MT(21:18) And seeing of the fig tree by the wayside he went to it and found nothing on it but leaves only.
- LK(8:44-45) (A woman) came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, who was it that touched me?

The following incidences are often quoted to prove that Jesus was a know-all:

On seeing Nathaniel, Jesus said "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"(JN 2:47). Nathaniel then exclaims in excitement: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"(JN 2:49).

"And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think ye evil in your hearts"(MT 9:3-4).

"And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter... Jesus saith unto him...lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee"MT (17:24-27).

The first two incidences are such that if we take out Jesus's name and put a reasonably intelligent man in his place, then we should not be surprised if he also made similar understanding of the situation. There is nothing to suggest the need for even an unusual demand of knowing the unknown. Before seeing Nathaniel, Jesus had asked two disciples following him "what seek ye?(JN 1:38). Had he been all-knowing, it would have been self-evident to him why they were following him. In fact Nathaneal did ask Jesus "Whence knowest thou me?" and Jesus explained to him: "Before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee"(JN 1:48). "To be under the fig tree" was a rabbinical expression that meant "to study Torah". The fig tree appears in Old Testament as a symbol of righteousness of Israel. "Every man shall sit under his own fig tree" refers to the ideal state of man in which he keeps the Commandments and enjoys his favours. "The fig tree shall not blossom"(Hbk 3:17; Jere 8:13) means that God has turned against Israel. Jesus also uses this term when he cursed the fig tree which in fact was a prophecy of the disaster to befall the Jews(MK 11:13-14; MT 21:19).

As for "finding a coin in fish's mouth", consider the following version:" take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth (go sell it and) there is your required piece of money". The rest could be a myth!

Consider another example: A little while, and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while, and ye shall see me .. then said some of this disciples among themselves, what is this

that he saith unto us.. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him"(JN 16:16). It is obvious that a man with an average commonsense would anticipate doubts in the minds of others under such circumstances. No divine knowledge is required.

If foretelling is to be an exclusive divine attribute then Caiaphas the High Priest could also qualify on the basis of his so-called prophecy "that Jesus should die for that nation: and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (JN 11:51-52).

VIII. God is Merciful. He alone is the Saviour

- Ps(34:19) Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.
- MT(10:34): Do not think I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
- LK(1:46-47) (Mary said) My soul doth magnify lord, and my spirit hath rejoined in God my saviour.
- JN(12:27) (Jesus said): Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say, Father save me from this hour?
- 1 Cor(16:34) O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever.
- Isa(43:3,11) I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour... I, even I, am the Lord: and besides me there is no saviour.

IX. God does not sleep nor slumber siezes Him

- Ps(121:3-4) He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither sleep nor slumber.
- MK(4:38) But he(Jesus) was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care if we perish?

X. God is Omnipresent: He is everywhere and he cannot be limited to time or space. Jesus lived a human life, fixed in time and space. Even now, according to Christian doctrine, he is at the right side of God(Eph 1:20) (he being not God Himself?). But first "he also descended to the lowest level, down to the very ower parts of the earth"(Eph 4:9).

According to the Trinitarian belief each of the three "Persons" of Holy Trinity is Coequal and Coeval. Is it conceivable that all the three "Persons" of the Trinity at the same time and individually and separately encompass the universe, or is it only one of them at a time? What happened when Jesus was located on the earth or went down to the hell after crucifixion?

XI. God is Immutable: He does not change; He is eternally self-consistant. According to Hebews(13:8): "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever". This is patently against the facts. Jesus was conceived in a woman's womb, lived as a child, grew up as an adult and tasted death.

XII. God is Not Tempted and is above all temptation. "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man"(Jas 1:13). Yet all the three Synoptic Gospels tell us that Jesus was tempted(MK 1:13; MT 4:3-11, LK 4:3-13). According to Random House Dictionary "Tempt" means "To be enticed or allured to do something unwise or immoral". If Jesus could do nothing that is morally wrong then he could not be tempted. Since most Christians believe in the "Original Sin" Jesus must have inherited that trait albeit through his mother's "seed". This tendency is exhibited by him in being tempted. Jesus may not have committed sin but

nevertheless he felt tempted, "was tempted"(MK 1:13), "has been tempted"(Heb 4:15), actually felt tempted, "drawn away of his own lust, and is enticed"(Js 1:14). He could, therefore, not be God.

XIII. God is Not Afraid: Jesus admits weakness of the flesh(MK 14:38, MT 26:41), was "exceeding sorrowful unto death (MK 14:34, MT 26:34), sought divine help (LK 23:42), was in agony about the danger so much so that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood"(LK 23:44). Being afraid of the Jews he went to the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem "not openly, but as it were secretly"(JN 7:10) even after telling (lying?) his brothers: I go not up yet unto this feast"(JN 7:8). He could, therefore, not be God.

MK(14:33-34) And he took Peter and James and John with him. Horror and dismay came over him, and he said to them, 'My heart is ready to break with grief'.

MK(14:35-36)/ Then he went forward a little threw himself on the ground MT(26:39)/and prayed that if it were possible this hour might pass him by.

LK(22:42) Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee, take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.

LK(22:44) And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

JN(7:10) But after his brothers had gone up to the feast then he also went, not publicly, but privately (Being afraid!).

JN(11:54) Jesus now stopped his public ministry and left Jerusalem and stayed there with his disciples (Being afraid!).

XIV. God is Self-sufficient: He has no need for anything or anyone. Jesus, as a human being had all the human needs. Even for his 'ascension', he had to be lifted up(Acts 1:9).

LK(8:2) And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils and, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others which ministered unto him of their substance.

MT(11:19) (Jesus said) The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say behold a man glutton and winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.

MT(21:3) If anyone says anything to you, you shall say the lord has need of them.

LK(9:58) Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

XV. God is Supreme

Gen(1:1) In the beginning God created the heaven and earth.

Isa(44:6) Thus saith the Lord ... I am the first and I am the last, besides me there is no God.

MK(12:34) God is one and beside him is no other.

MK(13:32) Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but my Father only.

JN(5:19-20) The Son can do nothing by himself.

Jesus, thus, could not be God!

MAKING OF A GOD, AN EXAMPLE

"In 1520, Hernan Cortes, advancing on the ancient Mexican capital of Tenochtitlan, was regarded as a god by the Aztecs. Never having seen firearms or horses before, the Aztecs regarded these things not only supernatural but as confirmation of Cortes' divine status, of his identity as an avatar of their supreme god, Quetzalcoatl. Today, of course, it is understandable how such a misconception can have occurred. Even to a Western European at the time, it would have been comprehensible. It is quite clear that there was nothing in any way divine about Cortes. And yet it is equally clear that in the minds of those who believed in his divinity, he was indeed a god.

"Let us suppose that a modern Mexican Indian, perhaps with vestiges of an Aztec heritage, asserts that he believes in Cortes' divinity. It might seem to us somewhat peculiar, but we could not presume to challenge his belief especially if his background, his education, his upbringing, his culture had all concurred to foster it. Moreover, his faith might entail something much more profound than a mere conviction of Cortes' divinity. He might assert that he experienced Cortes within him, that he communed personally with Cortes, that Cortes appeared to him in visions, that through Cortes he approached oneness with God or with the sacred. How could we possibly challenge such assertions? What a man experiences in the privacy of his psyche must of necessity remain inviolate and inviolable. And there are a great many people, quite sane, quite balanced, quite worthy of respect, who, in the privacy of their psyches, believe in things far stranger than the divinity of Hernan Cortes.

"But the times in which Cortes lived, like the times in which Jesus lived, are documented. We know quite a bit about the historical context, the world in which both figures existed. This knowledge is not a matter of personal belief, but of simple historical fact. And if a man permits his personal belief to distort, alter or transform historical fact, he cannot expect others, whether or not they share his belief, to condone the process. The same principle obtains if a man permits his personal belief to derange dramatically the laws of probability and what we know of human nature. We could not, as we said, challenge a man who believed in Cortes' divinity, or who, in some manner or form "experienced" Cortes within him. We could, however, challenge a man who asserted that, as a matter of historical fact, Cortes (like Quetzalcoatl) was born of an eagle and a serpent, or that Cortes was ordained to save the world, or that Cortes never died and now bides his time in some underground crypt awaiting a propitious moment to return and proclaim his sovereignty over Mexico. We could challenge a man who asserted that Cortes, even without his armour, was immune to spears and arrows, that he rode a horse through sea or sky, or that he used weapons which in reality were not invented until two centuries later.

"It is not that established records of Cortes explicitly deny these things. They do not for the simple reason that no such things were ever asserted about Cortes during his lifetime. But such things fly so flagrantly in the face of known history, so flagrantly in the face of human experience, so flagrantly in the face of simple probability, that they impose an inordinate strain upon credulity. As personal belief, they may be unimpeachable. But presented as historical fact, they rest on too improbable and too tenuous a basis"(Michael Baigent, et. al.: *The Messianic Legacy*, pp. 12-13).

THE VERDICT ON DIVINITY

We have tried to analyse various bases of Christian claims for the divinity of Jesus and the concept of Trinity with reference to the Bible itself. However we look at it, the New Testament, even though deliberately compiled for this specific purpose, does not provide any logical evidence toward even a remote possibility of Jesus' divinity, expressed or intended, provided we view the Bible text objectively without being blinded by illogical preconceptions.

Since Jesus does not fulfill even the basic criteria of divinity, let us pay homage to the "King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only Wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever! Amen" (1 Tim 1:17). "And the Lord shall be king over all earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech 14:9).

PROPHET

The question now arises about the status that Jesus had while on this earth. The hope of Israel was kindled and kept alive all over the periods of trials and tribulations by the declaration of Moses: "A prophet shall thy Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me...." (Acts 3:22). The original declaration is in Deuteronomy (18:15). When priests and Levites went from Jerusalem to ask John "who art thou?" (JN 1:20), they asked him if he was the Christ, Elias, or "that prophet". John's answer was that he was not any of these. This underlines the search for "that prophet". Both these quotations speak of a 'prophet' "like unto Moses," which is important to note before we start our analysis. That Prophet was at best to be like unto Moses, not a divine being. No Jew in his right mind would have considered that the Messiah (even if he was also Elias and "that prophet" combined) would be anything but a human being.

There are several instances even in the New Testament where Jesus is stated to be a "prophet" (Not necessarily "that prophet"):

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| MK(6:16) | He is a prophet like one of the old prophets. |
| MT(11:4-5) | Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. [These are the signs which the Jews expected from prophets]. |
| MT(21:11) | And the multitude said, this is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth. |
| LK(7:16) | A great prophet has appeared among us. |
| LK(24:19) | (The two on the road to Emmaus): Jesus of Nazareth, which was prophet of might in deed and work before God and all the people. |
| JN(4:19,29) | The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. [Jesus did not deny this]. |
| JN(6:14) | Then those men, when they had seen the miracles that Jesus did, said, this is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. |
| JN(7:40) | Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying said, of a truth this is a prophet. |

- JN(7:51) Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. [Obviously the Jews were saying that Jesus coming out of Galilee was a FALSE PROPHET].
- JN(9:17) They said unto the blind man again, what sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He saith, He is a prophet.
- Acts(7:52) Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been the betrayers and murderers. [Jesus' followers compared his killing to that of the prophets in the past. They did not charge them of "killing the prophets before and now even the Son of God himself"!].
- Jesus himself is reported to have referred to himself as "prophet":
- MT(13:57) And they were offended to him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.
- LK(4:24) No prophet is accepted in his own country.
- JN(4:44) No prophet hath honour iN his own country.
- LK(13:33-34) (On way to Jerusalem, Jesus said): it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem..... O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets.....[Thus he acknowledged himself as a "prophet"].

The following article is adapted from the book "Muhammad in the Bible" by Prof. Abdul Ahad Dawud, former Bishop of Uramiah.

BAR NASHA

We are not sure about the actual authorship or the authenticity of the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. This book contains many prophecies which are considered important by most Christian sects especially the Seventh Day Adventists (whom most Christians consider as heretic) and others who believe in the Voice of Prophecy. Irrespective of authenticity of these prophecies, we must at least analyse what could these prophecies mean.

One of his prophecies is based on a dream: "I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another" (Dan 7:2,3).

According to the interpretation by the Angel, each one of the four beasts represents an empire. The eagle-winged lion signifies the Chaldean Empire, which was mighty and rapid like an eagle to pounce upon the enemy. The bear represents the "Madai-Paris," or the Medo-Persian Empire, which extended its conquests as far as the Adriatic Sea and Ethiopia, thus holding with its teeth a rib from the body of each one of the three continents of the Eastern Hemisphere. The third beast, from its tigrish nature of swift bounds and fierceness, typifies the triumphant marches of Alexander the Great, whose vast empire was, after his death, divided into four kingdoms.

But the Angel who interprets the vision does not stop to explain with details the first three kingdoms as he does when he comes to the fourth beast. Here he enters with emphasis into details. Here the scene in the vision is magnified. The beast is practically a monster and a huge demon. This is the formidable Roman Empire. The ten horns are the ten Emperors of Rome who persecuted the early Christians. Turn the pages of any Church history for the first three centuries down to the time of the so-called conversion of Constantine the Great, and you will read nothing but the horrors of the famous "Ten Persecutions."

All these wild beasts were the enemies of the "holy people of God," as the old Israel and the early followers of the Gospels were called. For they alone had the true knowledge, the scriptures and the revelation of God. These wild beasts persecuted and massacred the people of God. But the nature and the character of the Little Horn which sprang up on the head of the fourth monster was so different from that of the other animals, that God Himself had, as it were, to come down and establish His throne in the firmament, to judge and condemn to destruction the fourth animal; to summon to His presence the Bar Nasha — "Son of Man" — and to make him the Sultan of men; for the words *shoitana*, *yaqar*, *malakutha*, which signify respectively the "empire, honour, kingdom" of all the peoples and nations, were granted to him (verse 14) and to the "people of the Saints of the Most High" (verse 27). It will be noticed that as the Son of Man is nobler than, and superior to, the beasts, so the religion which he professed and established is infinitely holier than that of the Little Horn.

Now let us examine and find out who the Little Horn is. Having once definitely ascertained the identity of this eleventh king, the identity of the Bar Nasha will be settled *per se*. The Little Horn springs up after the Ten Persecutions under the reigns of the emperors of the Roman Power. The empire was writhing under four rivals, Constantine being one of them.

They were all struggling for the purple; the other three died or fell in battle; and Constantine was left alone as the supreme sovereign of the vast empire.

The earlier Christian commentators have in vain laboured to identify this ugly Little Horn with the Anti-Christ, with the Pope of Rome by Protestants, and with the Founder of Islam (God forbid!) [and later even Hitler]. But the later Biblical critics are at a loss to solve the problem of the fourth beast which they wish to identify with the Greek Empire and the Little Horn with Antiochus. Some of the critics, e.g. Carpenter, consider the Medo-Persian Power as two separate kingdoms. But this empire was not more two than the late Austro-Hungarian Empire was. The explorations carried on by the Scientific Mission of the French savant, M. Morgan, in Shushan (Susa) and elsewhere leave no doubt on this point. The fourth beast can, therefore, be no other than the old Roman world.

To show that the Little Horn is no other than Constantine the Great, the following arguments can safely be advanced:-

(a) He overcame Maximian and the other two rivals and assumed the purple, and put an end to the persecution of Christianity. Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is, I think, the best history that can instruct us about those times. You can never invent four rivals after the Ten Persecutions of the Church, other than Constantine and his enemies who fell before him like the three horns that fell before the little one.

(b) All the four beasts are represented in the vision as irrational brutes; but the Little Horn possessed a human mouth and eyes which is, in other words, the description of a hideous monster endowed with reason and speech. He proclaimed Christianity as the true religion, left Rome to the Pope and made Byzantium, which was named Constantinople, the seat of the empire. He pretended to profess Christianity but was never baptized [As a Unitarian] till a little before his death, and even this is a disputed question. The legend that his conversion was due to the vision of the Cross in the sky has long since — like the account about Jesus(P) Christ inserted in the *Antiquities of Josephus* — been exploded as another piece of forgery.

The enmity of the beasts to the believers in God was brutal and savage, but that of the rational Horn was diabolical and malignant. This enmity was most noxious and harmful to the religion, because it was directed to pervert the truth and the faith. All the previous attacks of the four empires were pagan; they persecuted and oppressed the believers but could not pervert the truth and the faith. It was this Constantine who entered in the fold of Jesus(P) in the shape of a believer and in the clothes of a sheep, but inwardly he was not a true believer at all. How poisonous and pernicious this enmity was will be seen from the following:-

(c) The Horn-Emperor speaks "big things" or "great words" (torbhan in the Chaldean tongue) against the Most High. To speak blasphemous words about God, to associate with Him other creatures, and to ascribe to Him foolish names and attributes, such as the "begetter" and "begotten," "birth" and "procession" (of the second and the third person), "unity in the trinity" and "incarnation," is to deny His unity.

Ever since the day when God revealed Himself to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees until the Creed and the Acts of the Council of Nicea were proclaimed and enforced by an imperial edict of Constantine amidst the horror and protests of three-fourths of the true believing members in A.D. 325, never has the unity of God so officially and openly been profaned by those who pretended to be His people as Constantine and his gang of the unbelieving ecclesiastics!

The next important point in this exciting vision is to identify the "BAR NASHA", or the Son of Man, who destroyed the Horn. However, before finding out who this Son-of-Man is, it is but essential that we should take into consideration the following points and considerations:

(a) When a Hebrew prophet predicts that "all the nations and people of the earth shall serve him", i.e. Bar Nasa or "the people of the Saints of the Most High", he means thereby the nations mentioned in Genesis(15:18-21) and not the English, the French, or the Chinese nations.

(b) By the phrase "the people of the Saints of the Most High" it is understood to mean first the Jews and then the Christians who confessed the absolute unity of God, fought and suffered for it until appearance of the Bar Nasha and the destruction of the Horn.

(c) After the destruction of the Horn the people and the nations that will have to serve the Saints of God are the Chaldeans, Medo-Persian, Greeks and Romans — the four nations represented by the four beasts that had trod upon and invaded the Holy Land.

(d) We must remember that neither Judaism nor Christianity have an appropriate name. Surely Moses himself was not a "Jew" while Jesus(P) was not a "Christian" but rather a Jew. The Scriptural term used in the vision of Daniel is the same as applied repeatedly by the Quran to Islam, namely, "Din" which means "judgment." God on His "Korsiya" or throne is the "Day-yana" or the "Judge." Let us read the description of this celestial Court of Judgment: "the tribunals are set, the books are opened, and the 'Dina' — judgment — is established". By the "Books" is to be understood the "Preserved Table" wherein the decrees of God are inscribed from which the Qur-an was transcribed and revealed by the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad; and also the books of accounts of every man's actions. It was according to the decrees and laws of God contained in that "Preserved Table," and the wicked actions of the Horn, that the Great "Dayyana" — the Judge — condemned it to death and appointed Muhammad to be "Adone," i.e. "Commander" or "Lord," to destroy the monster. All this language of Daniel is extremely Quranic. The religion of Islam is called "Dinu L-Islam". It was according to the decrees and laws of this "Dina" that the "Barnasha" destroyed the Devil's religion and his lieutenant the Horn.

(e) Islam is, indeed, a "judgment of peace," because it possesses an authenticated Book of Law, with which justice is administered and iniquity punished, the truth discerned and the falsehood condemned; and above all, the unity of God, the eternal rewards for good deeds, and eternal damnation for wicked actions are clearly stated and defined. In English a magistrate is called "Justice of Peace;" that is to say, a "judge of peace." Now this is in imitation of a Muslim Judge, who settles a quarrel, decides a case, by punishing the guilty and rewarding the innocent, thus restoring peace. This is Islam and the law of Qur-an. It is not Christianity nor the Gospel, for the latter absolutely forbids a Christian to appeal to a judge, however innocent and oppressed he may be(MT 5:25, 26, 38-48).

(f) Gospels record Jesus(P) having called himself "Son of Man" yet he himself fell victim to one of the prophetic beasts. it must therefore be someone else, coming much later, who will destroy the Horn, who will be the Bar Nasha, son of Man, of Daniel's dream.

There has never lived upon this earth a Prince-Prophet like Muhammad(B) who belonged to a dynasty that reigned for a long period of 2500 years, was absolutely independant, and never bent its neck under a foreign yoke. He was a descendant of Ishmael(P), the firstborn son of Abraham(P) with whom God had made the Covenant "between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant"(Gen 17:7). Small wonder that Prophet David calls Muhammad "My Lord"(Ps 50:10).

CHAPTER XVII

THE HERETICS

In one of his earlier letters, the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul wrote thus: "A false god has no existence in the real world. There is no god but one. For indeed, if there be so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth — as indeed there are many gods and many lords — yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come, towards whom we move and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came to be, and we through him"(1 Cor 8:4-6). This relationship of the Father being the God and Jesus being the Lord seems to be what Barnabas and Paul may have been teaching until their parting. In fact none of the later teachings of Paul himself have any semblance of the doctrine of Trinity, a doctrine which was developed much later by the Pauline church albeit as an intended or unintended consequence of Paul's teachings and the environment in which this church developed.

The split between Paul and the mother church at Jerusalem, known as the Nazarenes/Nazoreans, was the first major schism that occurred among those who claimed to be the followers of Jesus. Many other groups sprang up out of the confusion that arose after the Jewish revolt and its fallout. Everyone had a free hand to interpret Jesus' teachings as these passed from one to the other mostly verbally.

The earliest rivalry to "Christianity" was with the followers of John the Baptist who were also claiming that John had "risen". But soon there were dissensions within the Christians themselves; each group claiming that they had the right inspiration and that the others were misguided. There seem to have been numerous groups who were now saying "I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ"(1 Cor 1:2). According to Paul "any man teaching otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing"(1 Tim 6:3-4), "Some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor where of they affirm"(1 Tim 1:6-7). He advised the Corinthians: "do not unite yourselves with unbelievers; they are no fit mates for you"(1 Cor 6:34). He laid down the rule against the heretics: "A man that is heretick after first and second admonition reject knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself"(Tit 3:10), "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful workers of darkness but rather reprove them"(Eph 5:11). John(the Elder) advised: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"(1 Jn 10). The door was closed once for all against any dissent and discussion. Pattern was laid that anyone deviating from the Pauline line was "Anathema Maranatha". From the very beginning anyone dissenting from the Pauline teachings was labelled 'false' or heretic.

Since these dissensions and ensuing quarrels determined the way the Pauline Church developed, it seems important to understand in what manner did the Pauline church stifle these dissenting voices and became what it is today. Only a brief survey of major groups or movements will be included since our intention is not to study those movements themselves, but how they were dealt with and eliminated.

THE NAZAREANS

In reality, the first 'heresy' was that of Paul himself since his preachings and thought constituted the "deviation", while Nazarean tradition followed by the "twelve", James, and

other members of the original Mother Church at Jerusalem which Paul defied (and defiled) and which Pauline thought supplanted, was the closest thing to a pure 'Christianity' that ever existed. But once Pauline thought had consolidated its own position, it automatically became the 'established orthodoxy', and from that point on anything that clashed with it became, by definition, a 'heresy'.

Justin Martyr, writing around 150 C.E., speaks of those who regard Jesus as having been the Messiah, yet at the same time still a man. They adhere to Judaic law in such matters as circumcision, observance of Sabbath and dietary restrictions. Half a century later Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons issued, his violent and dogmatic attack 'ADERSUS HAERESSES', on the prevalent heresies of the time, Irenaeus fulminates against a group whom he calls the "Ebionites" [meaning the "Poor"] who according to him "insist that Jesus was a man, not God, and was not born of a virgin, but he became the Messiah only at the time of his baptism, who use only the Gospel of Matthew and like Jesus himself, as well as the Essenes or Zadokites of two centuries before expound upon the prophetic books of the Old Testament. They adhere scrupulously to Judaic law. They reject the Pauline letters and reject the apostle Paul, calling him an apostate from the Law". During the time of Constantine, the Church historian Eusebius was still attacking "the Ebionites" for being heretical who held the view that 'the epistles of the Apostle [Paul] ought to be rejected altogether, calling him a renegade from the Law; and using only the Gospel of the Hebrews, they treated the rest with scant respect. In the late fourth or early fifth century, another Church writer, Epiphanius, using the terms 'Ebionites' and 'Nazareans' interchangeably, condemns them for denying Virgin Birth, teaching that Jesus was a man born of men, declaring that Jesus became Messiah only on his baptism and using alternate versions of the Acts of the Apostles. They are not 'ashamed' to denounce Paul, believing him to be PSEUDO APOSTOLORUM, "a false apostle".

The Nazareans were the most persecuted and, being disliked by not only the Romans and the Jews but also by the Pauline Christians, were dispersed to four corners of the Roman Empire.

THE SIMONIANS

We learn of Simon in Acts(8:9) where he is said to be practicing 'magic' and for this reason he is known as Simon Magus or Simon the Sorcerer. [If you are with us then you perform a miracle; if you are against us then you are a sorcerer!]. He was among the first to dissent from Pauline thinking and openly preached an alternate theory tinged with Greek philosophy. He is considered to be the real founder of Christian Gnosticism. His followers are said to have lasted well into second century C.E. There are no Simonian writings available to date as these were completely obliterated. What we learn about them is through writings of the official church which are obviously derogatory.

THE GNOSTICS

The word "Gnostic" has its root in 'Gnos' meaning secret knowledge. Gnostics contested the theory that since Jesus' resurrection experience was unique and witnessed only by Jesus' close disciples (Paul's five hundred witnesses being un-corroborated and most doubtful) it could not be verified as an independent personal experience. To them this was taking the phenomenon of resurrection too literally and, therefore, the faith of fools. They maintained that Jesus's resurrection was a spiritual experience. Although the Gnostics wrote a vast number of books, until recent times we have known about them only indirectly through comments of the followers of the Official Christianity. Their literature has surfaced only recently accidentally at Nag

Hammadi in Egypt. This is thought to have been buried for fear of being destroyed by the persecutors.

Paul in his letters to Timothy mentions "some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of where is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan ..." (I Tim 1: 20) "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already" (II Tim 2:17-18). "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil" (II Tim 4:14). These are supposed to be Gnostics who were delivered unto Satan, excommunicated, by Paul who took to himself to be the sole arbiter of what was acceptable and what was to be the "heresy". His example would be followed by later church fathers with horrible consequences for the 'heretics'.

THE MONTANISTS

As the Pauline church set itself to adapting pagan concepts and practices or adopting these to its own practice, Montanus appeared on the scene somewhere in the middle of the second century C.E. He declared that he was the Paraclete promised by Jesus. The essence of Montanism was a call for the revival of primitive enthusiasm.

Montanists lived a strict life of fasting several days a week. To them marriage was distasteful weakness of the flesh. Marriage was to be performed only once and second marriage after the death of a spouse was considered by them as a 'successive bigamy'. Reproduction was unnecessary since the world was soon to come to an end on the return of the Lord which seemed to have been delayed because of the widespread sin. To hasten the return of the Lord they advocated stricter church discipline. Montanists glorified martyrdom 'so that he who suffered for you may be glorified'. Tertullian in his later years is said to have become a Montanist. Here thus was a movement not away from the accepted Christian thought but seeking stricter church discipline. The movement put the church into a crisis and quandry. Should it succumb to this fundamental pressure and return to its past or continue on its path of adapting to the world and remain palatable to its new-found flock among the Gentile lands. After a fierce internal struggle the church decided on the second course. Around 177 C.E. the Montanists were excommunicated and expelled from the church as 'heretics', "Influenced by the devil". This was a conscious fundamental decision which decided the future course of church toward lax rules and paganisation of the teachings of the monotheist Jesus. If anything, this has been a major turning point for Christianity away from Jesus' teachings however diluted they already had been.

As could be expected, the new horizons that now opened to the church lead to the election of Callistus as the Bishop of Rome in 217 C.E. Callistus favoured lenient view of unchastity and even permitted women of high rank to have lovers and to regard such as their husbands without proper marriage. He called himself a realist pointing out that the superhuman ideal of a pure community could not be put into practice in the long run in this earthly world. This new laxity once again gave rise to counter movements by Hippolytus and Novation but these were short lived. Interestingly, Hippolytus having been banished to Sardinia succumbed to the unhealthy climate. Before his untimely death he reconciled with the church. Later the church would canonise this heretic as a saint!

THE DONATISTS

While in Rome the church had been adopting Roman and pagan ideas, in the churches the teachings of the original disciples and apostles had remained very much intact. These were the Unitarians who vehemently opposed the concept of Trinity. The Unitarians of

Africa refused to compromise on matters to which the church at Rome had long adapted itself. As long as there was no patronage the Trinitarians and Unitarians, being nevertheless at loggerhead and engaged in war of words, vied with each other less violently. However as the Roman church tried to assert itself as the official church the two groups found themselves in violent confrontation and conflict.

In 313 C.E. a Unitarian priest called Donatus was chosen as the bishop of Carthage. The church at Rome which now considered itself as the Official Church tried to replace him by its own nominee, a bishop by the name of Caccallian. The prestige of the sun-worshipping Emperor Constantine was such that both the parties appealed to him. Constantine supported the appointment of Caccallian. Donatists refused to accept this verdict. When all attempts to unite the two churches failed, Constantine decided to persuade the Donatists by force. For the first time schism and unorthodoxy became an offence punishable by secular law. The generous provisions of the Edict of Milan allowing religious freedom only applied to those who did as the Emperor wished. The Roman army, called into action in the name of Christ and the holy Church began a fearful massacre of the Donatists. Bishops were murdered, churches were burnt or handed over to the clergy of the Official Church. Those who would not yield were killed or taken into slavery. The extensive literature of the Donatists was systematically destroyed under pain of death for those found in possession of it. In this way a pattern was set for dealing with "heresy" and treatment of the 'heretics'.

THE ARIANS

The North African Christian community where the Nazorean concepts had yet remained relatively free from pagan thought were strongly anti-Trinitarian. Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, was of the view that Jesus was not God but a man and a prophet. Lucian, a strong anti-Trinitarian, later became Bishop of Antioch. Arius, a disciple of Lucian was ordained as a deacon by Peter, the Bishop of Alexandria. However, due to his anti-Trinitarian views Peter excommunicated Arius. Achilles, the successor of Peter again ordained Arius as a priest but Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, again excommunicated him. The influence of the Unitarians was particularly strong in Alexandria. Arius refused to submit to pressure. He argued that if Jesus was in reality the "Son of God" then it followed that the "Father" must have existed before the 'Son'. This obviously meant that there must have been a time when only the "Father" existed but there was no "Son". The Arians believed that Jesus was as human as anyone else but being a chosen one of God he held a status only in degrees above the ordinary human beings.

The Arian views were clearly against those held by the church in Rome which was taking a stance of being the Official Church. Alexander and his subordinate in the church, a clergy named Athanasius, condemned Arius and his followers. There was great dissension between the followers of Unitarianism and Trinitarianism with physical clashes and the peace of the area was affected. Emperor Constantine needed to act but by now was wise after his experience with the Donatists. Furthermore, the controversy was now raging within the imperial palace itself where the Queen Mother was inclined toward Pauline Christianity while princess Constantina, sister of Constantine, was a disciple of Arius. Constantine made concerted efforts to reconcile the two parties. But their positions were poles apart and irreconcilable. Constantine, who was himself a pagan sun-worshiper, hardly understood, or cared to understand, such differences. His main concern being peace in his empire, he desired that "if we cannot all think alike on all topics we can at least be united on great essentials. As

regards the Divine providence let there be one faith and one understanding, one united opinion in reference to God".

The differences among the official church and the Arians, however, went beyond Three or One. There were disputes about the Gospels and other writings. It was to resolve such differences that the Council of Nicaea was convened in 325 C.E. This Council instead of narrowing the gap actually widened it. Once the Official Church found itself in control, it labelled all other sects as "heretics". The Nazarenes/Nazoreans, the Ebonites, the Donatists and the Arians, in fact all those who affirmed Unity of God were persecuted. Princess Constantina did not give up her own struggle and pressured Constantine to change his stance. In 336 C.E. when Arius was scheduled to visit the cathedral of Constantinople in triumph he died suddenly. The Pauline Church called it a miracle. The Emperor knew it was a murder. Arius had been poisoned. Constantine banished Athanasius and two of his fellow bishops. It is an irony that when Constantine, the sun worshiper, accepted Christianity at his deathbed in 337 C.E. He was baptised by an Arian priest Eusebius of Nicomedia! Catholic Church would nevertheless canonise him for his service to Christianity and he is now known as Saint Constantine.

Constantine's son Constantius, who succeeded him, was also an Arian. In 360 C.E. Constantius called the Council of Rimini and a creed was ratified in the council of Seleucia. St. Jerome states that the world marveled to find itself Arian. The Arians, however, did not impose their faith on others through coercion. The Trinitarian Church lay low but not inactive. The above councils were attended by a large number of Trinitarian bishops, such was the fickleness of their faith! The Pauline church, however, soon retracted its support when Emperor Theodosius came to power. He was the first emperor to be baptised a Trinitarian. Now that it became the Official Church the Pauline Church proceeded to persecute the heretics once again. Gregory of Nazianzus was elected as the new Trinitarian bishop of Constantinople. The Arian bishop Damophilus was exiled and the cathedral of St. Sophia was handed over to the Trinitarians. Gregory needed an armed guard to protect him from the people.

The official church began to exert its influence over the Emperor who promulgated at least fifteen different severe edicts against the heretics. Any law which the 'heretics' might attempt to use as a defence was automatically considered invalid. The rigorous prohibition of the use of their places of worship was extended to every possible circumstance in which the 'heretics' might assemble to worship their Lord. Their gatherings, whether public or private, by day or by night, in cities or in the country, were equally proscribed. The buildings and lands which they used for worship were confiscated. Anyone preaching and practising the rival faith was heavily fined or exiled. A man could commit any outrage against an 'heretic' with impunity from the law. Since they were not permitted to make a will or receive any benefit from a dead person's will, they soon lost what little property they had. It is estimated that in the years that followed after the original council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. about one and a half million Unitarians died in various persecutions.

A special group of people was instituted to execute the edicts and to deal with the 'heretics'. An office of the Inquisitor of the Faith was created. This was the beginning of the long period of persecution of 'heretics' by the combined forces of Church and State which found its worst form in the medieval and Spanish inquisitions. It is significant that whereas Constantine had retained the control of the clergy, the Official Church established its authority in the reign of Theodosius. Eventually the influence of Pope was so great that he became the arbiter to decide who would be the next Emperor of the Catholic Empire.

THE GOTHS AND THE VANDALS

The Goths are believed to have originated in North Europe from where they settled on both sides of the river Volga around 240 B.C.E. Those who settled on the western bank are known as the Visigoths while those on the eastern bank were called the Ostrogoths.

A leader of the Visigoths, named Ulfilas, came to Constantinople shortly after the death of Constantine and was met by Constantius himself. Ulfilas is said to be a knowledgeable person. He invented an alphabet for the Gothic language and translated Septuagint in this language in the new alphabet. He also translated an early gospel which was not one of the four official gospels. Ulfilas and his followers affirmed their faith in the One and Only True God. They declared that there is only One God, the Father, Alone, Unbegotten, Invisible, Eternal and Uncorruptible. Ulfilas returned to his people after he was made bishop in 341 C.E.

There is a revealing description of the majority of bishops of those times by none other than Gregory of Nazianzus himself: "the most worthless and corrupt were always the most eager to frequent, and disturb, the episcopal assemblies... in the various resolutions of the church and state, the religion of their sovereign was the ruler of their obsequious faith." Ulfilas refused to join such a wretched lot and instead challenged them to a public disputation. Theodosius favoured the idea and called a council. Ulfilas arrived in Constantinople. The Official Church, however, pressured Theodosius to cancel the council and decree that "neither privately at home nor publicly, nor in any place whatsoever should any disputation concerning the faith be held". Shortly after Ulfilas died under mysterious circumstances. Theodosius now proceeded to forcibly convert the Visigoths.

The Visigoths did not take their persecution lying down. Under the leadership of their new leader Alaric they defeated the Roman Catholic army in 401 C.E. and occupied Rome. Alaric gave strict orders that no building was to be burnt down and the right of asylum was granted to all Roman Catholic churches. The Visigoths acted most honourably. In due course the Visigoths spread to Gaul (France) and Spain.

The invasion of Attila the Hun left Italy in utter confusion. Into this political vacuum now entered the Ostrogoths who moved in with their families with the full intention of settling there. Under the benevolent rule of the Ostrogoth king Theodoric, who was an Arian by faith, peace prevailed in the Western Empire which was now predominantly Arian in faith which customarily tolerated divergent views. The Catholic Church was allowed to operate without interference and remained unmolested.

However, under freedom granted by the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, the Roman Catholic Church, did not remain inactive and took full advantage of the chaos that was rampant in Italy. As the common man's life became harder and miserable, the church grew in power and splendour.

In the Eastern Empire, however, Emperor Justinian was persecuting all those who refused to accept the official religion. Theodoric sent Pope John to Constantinople to request Justinian to allow the Arians in his empire the same indulgence as was enjoyed by the Catholics in the Western Empire. It is suspected that Pope John played false by double dealing. Justinian refused to stop persecution of the Arians. In retaliation, Theodoric, himself "a tolerant and benevolent ruler, by the bigotry of his subjects and enemies, was driven to the brink of persecution". After the death of Theodoric, Italy soon fell into chaos and the Catholic Church which had enjoyed the sunshine of tolerance but always looking for an opportunity to resurface, now asserted itself once again.

Like the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, another North European tribe, the Vandals, had accepted the Arian faith. They moved into Spain and then into North Africa where they

came into contact with the Donatists. Together they faced the Official Church and withstood it for over a hundred years. History speaks of them as destructive and tyrannical (hence the term "vandalism") but the history after all was written by their opponents. There had been continuous persecution of the Donatists during the century prior to the arrival of the Vandals and under such circumstances, the retaliation and the desire for revenge was understandable. The Encyclopedia Britannica records that there seems to be no justification for charge of wilful and objectless destruction which is implied in the term 'Vandalism'. Gibbon (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire) is also of the view that their destructive rage has been over-exaggerated.

In 477 C.E. Honneric became king of the Vandals in North Africa. He tried to make peace with the Roman Empire asking for tolerance on both sides toward opposing faiths. When his conciliatory proposal was spurned he imposed all the laws, by which the Official Church had persecuted the Donatists, on the Official Christians themselves. Once again, by rejecting a hand of tolerance, the Official Church drove a tolerant ruler to persecute his opponents. In 533 C.E. Roman general Belisarius reconquered Carthage and established the Official Church in Africa once more. Trinitarians now retaliated against their opponents more fiercely.

It is under such conditions of cruel persecution that Islam brought its light in North Africa. To the Arians, Donatists and other Unitarians the new faith was found to be an extension and reaffirmation of the guidance they had been following: "There is no god but one God, Alone, Eternal, Unbegotten, Invisible and Uncorruptible". They readily embraced it.

THE NESTORIANS

This has already been discussed in Chapter XIV.

DEALING WITH THE HERETICS

As soon as the Pauline/Trinitarian church got an upper hand it saw to it that any variant groups were violently suppressed. All documents that were not in conformity with the official doctrines were destroyed. The crime of having any forbidden book carried the penalty of confiscation of all property and death. More than a million and a half Donatists, Arians and other heretics were killed in the early days of the church's patronage by the State.

As the Church became stronger it started using stronger tyrinical measures to crush the heretics. Special 'inquisitors' were appointed to try and punish the heretics. Anyone even suspected of heresy was brought before the inquisitor's court and questioned on his or her faith. Torture was applied in order to obtain a confession and to extort accusations against others during these torture sessions. The property of the accused was confiscated and even when the accusation was disproved, which rarely happened, these properties were never returned. Thousands died in these torture sessions. Those found guilty were hanged in public. Many were roasted alive on the stake. Worst crimes against opponents were committed in the history of the world in the name of the "prince of peace".

"Almost all Europe, for many centuries inundated with blood, which was shed at the direct instigation or with the full approval of the ecclesiastical authorities and under the public opinion that was directed by the Catholic clergy. Nor did the victims perish by a rapid and painless death, but by one which was carefully selected as amongst the most poignant the man can suffer. They were usually burnt alive not infrequently by a slow fire after their constancy had been tried by the most excruciating agonies that minds fertile in torture could devise. That the Church of Rome has shed more blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no one who has a complete knowledge of history"

(W.E.H. Lecky: Rise and Influence of Catholicism in Europe). Besides individual incidents of torture and murder the Church proceeded to eliminate whole groups of heretics some examples of which are given hereunder:

THE PRISCILLIAN HERESY

Probably the single most important figure in the development of early Spanish Christianity was the late fourth-century teacher Priscillian of Avila. Born into a high-ranking family, Priscillian remained a layman, never receiving ordination from Rome. His teaching was characterised by a marked strain on the Nestorian thought, as well as skeins of Gnostic Manichaeism. At the same time, he also drew heavily on a strictly Judaic body of material, including numerology, and other forms of early Cabalism .. firmly rooted in Essene/Zadokite/Nazarean sources. Priscillian seems, to have demanded adherence to at least certain tenets of Judaic law. In contrast to the Pauline Christianity, he observed the Sabbath on Saturday, denied Trinity, and used a great many books of specifically Nazarean orientation, including the Acts of Thomas. He also taught that Judas Thomas was Jesus' twin brother. In 386 C.E. Priscillian and at least five of his disciples were executed.

THE CATHARS (OR THE ALBIGENSES):

No authentic documents exist regarding the rise of the Cathars except from the condemnations from their apponents. They may have been the composite outcome of the Manicheism, the Melchisedekians and the Apostolics which had been previously ruthlessly suppressed by the Church. They were also called the Albigenses after the town of Albi in Languedoc and were particularly widespread in the south of France.

The Cathars passionately sought the kingdom of God and to them this could come only through highest moral standards. They considered this life to be a struggle between good and evil, a conflict between God and Satan. They thought entirely in terms of the hereafter and saw no value in this world; they were resolved to take the kingdom of Heaven by force. However, they were averse to taking of life, any form of life, and were, therefore, strict vegetarians. Their reverence for life had nothing to do with sentimentality; it sprang from religious principles of the highest order. They were pacifists to the extreme. Since Jesus had praised eunuchs as blessed (MT 19:12) to them a wee look at a woman (even on one's own wife) with desire was sinful.

According to them, the cross, being an instrument by which Jesus was so fearfully tortured, so cruelly killed, was unworthy of worship and veneration. They considered the veneration that the Church accorded to images to be plain and simple idolatry. The Mass, they contended, was unknown to the Apostles and the very name betrayed its pagan origin. To them the consecration of the Body of Christ at such a mass was evil. They contended that the body of the Lord was given to the disciples only once at the Last Supper and that what took place at the altars of the churches was "an empty, void spectacle". They considered penitence as unnecessary because once the soul received "consolation", all the sins were wiped out, the soul was saved and had no more need for penitence.

The most austere mode of life of the Cathars provided a sharp contrast with the corrupt clergy of the time. The Church was at a quandry as to what to do with these deviants against whose moral and temporal conduct no accusing finger could be raised. Bernard of Clairvaux, no friend of the Cathars, once remarked that there were no people more Christians than these heretics. They cheated and oppressed no one, their cheeks were pale from fasting and they earned their livelihood by honest work. Church first acted cautiously to win them

back to the fold but the Cathars remained steadfast to their beliefs. When the Church used stronger methods, the Cathars offered no resistance. Did not Jesus himself predict persecution for his true followers? They would go to the stakes giving each other the Christian kiss of peace with the words "God is love". To them there was no more beautiful death than that of the baptism by fire, God justified them in their suffering.

When individual punishments proved counter-productive the Church resorted to mass extermination of these heretics. Pope Innocent III proclaimed a holy "Crusade" against the Cathars. As in the case of the Crusades against the (Muslim) Saracens, the crusaders were promised the same indulgence: the lowest of the lowly sinner would escape hell by taking arms against the heretics. The property of the Cathars was allowed as a booty. The Albigensian War was waged to eradicate the Catharist heresy. Hordes of debased murderers encouraged on by the clergy descended on southern France. "Cities were pillaged, and blood baths ensued which have scarcely a parallel in the history of the West. From the infants in the cradles to the feeble old man, no one was spared; the crusaders slaughtered all the inhabitants without distinction. No mercy was shown to the prisoners; they were killed at once. The blasphemous watch word of the crusaders was: Kill them all, God will know his own" (Walter Nigy: The Heretics). This slogan was picked from Paul's II Epistle to Timothy: "He knoweth them that are his"(2:19). These fanatics thought they were doing a service to God(JN 16:2).

According to Arnold Amaury, the papal legate: "Our men sparing neither rank, sex, nor age, slew about 20,000 men with the edge of the sword; and when a huge slaughter of men had been made, the whole city [this for just one city!] was pillaged and burnt, the Divine Vengeance wonderously raging against it". At the massare of Lavaur 400 people were burnt in one pile, "they made a wonderful blaze and went to burn everlastingly in hell"(William Draper: History of Intellectual Development in Europe). Some 5000 were massacred in Marmand by order of the Bishop in 1218 C.E. Quite often the victims were savagely blinded and their noses cut off before delivering them to the stakes. According to one estimate one million Cathars fell victims to the church's blood lust.

THE WALDENSES:

These were pious keen evangelists who happened to denounce the doctrines of Transsubstantiation, the Auricular Confession, and the Image Worship. By papal command terrible persecutions were perpetrated against them in 1366 C.E. (Will Durant: The Age of Faith). In 1555 C.E. One hundred women were first tortured and then killed; other women and children sold as slaves. Such incidences were too many to be enumerated.

THE HUGUENOTS:

Some 20,000 "heretic" Huguenots were killed in 1567 C.E. Not content with this savagery thousands of Huguenots were clandestinely invited to the "wedding of Henry of Navarre" in Paris in 1572 C.E. Instead of the welcome feast at night, the church bell was tolled as a signal. "Sixty thousand men, transported with fury, and armed in different ways ran about whatever example, vengeance, rage, and the desire of plunder transported them, they neither spared the aged, nor women great with child, nor even infants. Six hundred houses were pillaged and four thousand persons massacred, with all the confusion and barbarity that can be imagined"(Rev. W.P. Hares: The Teaching and Practice of the Church of Rome in India Examined). In three days 25,000 had been massacred. Within a short period of 3 months as many as 70,000 Huguenots were killed.

SAVING MORE SOULS:

The church treated its heretics barbarously, to put it mildly. "Making every allowance required of a historian, and permitted to a Christian, we must rank the Inquisition, along the wars and persecutions of our time, as among the darkest blots in the records of mankind revealing a ferocity unknown in a beast" (Will Durant: The Age of Faith). Due to limitations of space and the subject itself it is not necessary to recount all the terrible horror that the church perpetrated upon its "heretics" in the name of the "Religion of love". In all Christian lands the same story was repeated in order to "save" sinful souls. In the Netherlands more than 50,000 people were killed besides about 25,000 in the Low Countries. During the short reign of the bloody Mary in England, almost 300 protestant clergy including bishops Crammer, Hooper, Latimer, Ridley and Farrar were burnt at stakes.

With immense power and fortunes at stake it was natural that the Church would have its own internal dissensions and rivalries. After the death of Paul I, the new Pope Constantine was deposed after five years and replaced by Pope Stephen who ordered the arrest and trial of Constantine. Constantine was blinded and the tongue of Bishop Theodorus was cut off for supporting him. In 795 C.E. Pope Leo II was blinded and his tongue cut off. Pope Stephen V was hounded out of Rome. Pope Formosus elected in 891 C.E. was deposed after five years. His body was later exhumed, adorned with papal robes and tried before an ecclesiastical council. Three fingers were cut off the corpse which was then cast into River Tiber.

THE WITCHES

When the sadistic appetite of the inquisitors was not satisfied with the killing of the heretics a wave of witch-hunt swept over Europe in the thirteenth century C.E. For the first time on behalf of the Official Church pope Gregory IX (1229- 1241) issued orders to indict witches along with the heretics. After all the gospels had confirmed the existence of demoniacs! Defendants brought before a judge were asked whether they believed in witchcraft. To say that one did not was the most incriminative. The Inquisitor began to entwine the defendant in a snare of questions. What had she been doing in the field before the thunder storm? Why had she quarrelled with such and such a person? Why did her garden thrive better than her neighbor's? For what had she entered the neighbor's barn? And so on.

"If this cross-examination did not lead to confession, the defendant was examined for the witch's marks. For this purpose she was stripped naked and the executioner shaved off all her body hair in order to seek in the hidden places of the body the sign which the devil imprinted on her cohorts. Warts, freckles, and birthmarks were considered certain token of amorous relations with Satan. This procedure along with its brutal violation of all modesty was an ordeal for women of the least sensitivity. But if the examination did not bring to light the witch's marks, the suspect was handed over to the torturers. The inquisitor was bent not only on extracting a confession from the witch, but also on having her implicate all those who had taken part in the nocturnal Sabbath with her. Many women, reduced by indescribable agonies to a state in which they were no longer responsible for what they said, denounced their own mothers and daughters. After the confession had been torturously obtained, the "Witch" was burnt alive on a stake in a public square generating terror as well as sadistic spectacle to the public. Thus a countless number of innocent women were burnt on the stake.

"Both Catholics and Reformers tended to hunt witches. With the exception of Zwingli, the German reformers accepted the mythology of witchcraft. They relied on Exodus 22:18 which laid down: "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live". Luther thought that witches should be burnt for making a pact with the Devil even if they harmed no one, and he had four of them

roasted at Wittenberg. Calvin said: The Bible teaches us that there are witches and that they must be slain.

"If the merits of Christianity as a civilizing force is to be in any way determined by its influence in working bloodshed, its record in the matter of witch-hunting alone would serve to place it, in that record, lower than any other creed" (J.M. Robertson: A Short History of Free Thought).

REFORMATION

Power politics that the Official Church joyfully indulged in brought its benefits. Churches were decked with gold, clergy became rich, influential and corrupt. Opposition to the Church was stifled with force. New ways were found to get more money through indulgences and forgiveness of sins. Popes issued "bulls" and edicts at their will according to contingencies of their personal interests and those of their benefactors. Churches and monasteries acquired huge estates. Church history indicates a "succession of worldly wise popes". Many of these papal "Viceregens of God" indulged in moral depravity and debauchery and had concubines. One of the Popes is said to have been a woman in male garb who got pregnant through her paramour and gave birth to a child in a congregation. Alexander I (Pope 1492-1503 C.E.) openly acknowledged and promoted his illegitimate children. The common saying of the time was: "If you want to ruin your son, make him a priest". According to Will Durant among accusations of (sexual) incontinence filed in England in 1499 (C.E.), clerical offenders numbered some 20% of the total, though the clergy were probably less than 2% of the population. Some confessors solicited sexual favours from female penitents. Thousands of priests had concubines; in Germany "nearly all". Most cardinals lacking cardinal virtues freely enjoyed cardinal sins.

"There was Albina, a rich and noble widow living in her palace on the Aventine with her widowed daughter Marcella, who wore the plain brown robe of the dedicated virgin. In the same palace lived Marcellina, the sister of Ambrose, another dedicated virgin, and there were perhaps twenty others Over this community Albina ruled with a stern hand, but she allowed saintly visitors, and Athanasius had once stayed in the palace, speaking at length the virtue of the desserts. . . Of all these the most talented, the most brilliant, the most genuinely ascetic was Paula, whose four daughters were to become the joy of Jerome's middle age . . . [St. Jerome] deliberately kept away from young women for a while, but when Albina issued an invitation begging him to visit her palace on the Aventine, he accepted, and the rest of his life was to be spent among the women whom he first met in this palace in Rome" (Robert Payme: The Fathers of the Western Church, pp.104-105). St. Augustine is said to have prayed: "My mother commanded me not to commit fornication, and especially that I should not defile any man's wife., This seemed to me no better than woman's counsel, which it would be a shame for me to follow" (Augustine: Confessions, II, 3).

With rampant corruption and tyranny, a revolt against the misuse of papal authority broke away from the Official Church in protest against its practices. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and other reformers formed their own Protestant groups. It is important to note that the "protestants" had no intention of breaking away from the Catholic Church. They were originally "protesting" against certain church practices and were trying only to reform its organisation. They were separated from the Catholic Church because that church itself decided to exclude them. It is unfortunate that these reformist movements did not seek reformation beyond minor doctrinal differences. On theological plane their differences were only flimsy and minor, e.g. Luther maintained a corporal, and Calvin a real, presence of Christ in the Eucharist while Zwingli was of the view that it was a spiritual communion. There are no

Pope asks forgiveness

OLOMOUC, Czech Republic — In a message aimed at healing a centuries-old legacy of religious wars and hatreds, Pope John Paul II yesterday asked forgiveness for the wrongs committed by the Catholic Church against Protestants and people of other faiths.

Speaking during a rain-soaked open-air Mass in a largely Catholic region of Moravia, the 75-year-old Polish-born Pope used the occasion of the canonization of a local Catholic priest tortured to death by Protestants in 1620 to press ahead with his increasingly insistent theme of ecumenical forgiveness.

"Today, I, the Pope of the Church of Rome, in the name of all Catholics, ask forgiveness for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics during the turbulent history of these peoples," he said, speaking before a crowd of less than 100,000 that had gathered for a Mass at an old Soviet airfield. "At the same time, I pledge the Catholic Church's forgiveness for whatever harm her sons and daughters suffered."

The solemn language, and its special formulation, made this the strongest of several recent papal statements examining the role and responsibility of the Church for crimes committed, and permitted, in its name over the centuries.

In a message dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, Pope John Paul said Europe's Christians should seek forgiveness for the horrors of a war that took place on a continent steeped in Christian civilization.

In a letter issued this month, the Pope made new overtures to the Eastern Orthodox churches, emphasizing the beliefs that bind the eastern and western churches despite their historic split. His goal, he has said repeatedly, is to promote greater unity among the world's Christians in anticipation of the millennium.

"The theme of ecumenicalism is one of the grand themes of the papacy and it is being advanced with increased priority," Joaquin Navarro-Valls, the Vatican's chief spokesman, said at a media briefing yesterday.

Navarro-Valls said that the Pope, who makes a practice of seeking out leaders of other religions on his trips, was satisfied with his interdenominational meeting in Prague on Saturday, which was attended by Jewish leaders as well as several Protestants.

But by elevating the Rev. Jan Sarkander to sainthood, Pope John Paul has actually fanned the embers of old rivalries that for several centuries made this part of Europe a battlefield between Christianity's competing creeds.

A leader of a major Protestant church in the Czech Republic stayed away from Saturday's meeting with the Pope in protest against the Vatican's canonization of a figure regarded by Protestants as a traitor.

Sarkander, a local priest who had a parish near here during the Counter-Reformation, was imprisoned and tortured by local Protestant leaders who accused him of serving as a spy for the Austrian empire. Regarded by local Catholics as a martyr for his faith, he was beatified by the Vatican in 1860, and proposed for sainthood in 1992.

But the Pope yesterday in two separate addresses insisted that Sarkander's canonization was intended to bind and not reopen old wounds.

"His martyrdom takes on extraordinary ecumenical eloquence," the Pope told a crowd at a meeting with young Catholics yesterday afternoon. "It speaks to all Christians who have separated because of tragic historical events."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

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basic difference between the Official Church and the Protestants with regard to Pauline teachings tainted by later doctrinaires. In fact the Augsburg Confession clearly states regarding the Lutheran faith that "there is nothing that is discrepant with the Scriptures, or with the Church Catholic, or even with the Roman Church, so far as that Church is known from writers".

Despite the fundamental similarity and agreement between the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant churches, the Official Church reacted sharply. There was widespread persecution of the break-away churches. However, since there were powerful princes on both sides, the persecution sometimes had political overtones and many wars were fought between followers of opposing groups. The "hundred years war" between the Catholic and Protestant princes of Europe was appallingly savage, compassion was unknown, barbarous cruelty a boast of both the sides. As the Catholic King Philip of Spain ordered "Let all prisoners be put to death, and suffer them no longer to escape through the neglect, weakness and bad faith of the judges". As a consequence trees along the highways were laden with carcasses or limbs of those who had been hanged, beheaded or roasted alive. The Protestant English army unleashed a reign of terror upon Catholic Ireland. These "bible-reading, psalm-singing soldiers of God" executed every Catholic they captured.

In their zealotry to establish the kingdom of God the Protestants, too, were not far removed from the Roman Catholic Church. John Calvin (Jean Cauvin) was a French man who together with William Farel, another French reformer, settled in French-speaking Geneva and turned that city into a Theocracy combining the functions of Church and State. Strict regulations and sanctions were instituted even for such matters as public sanitation and fire prevention. It is recorded that for arranging a bride's hair in what was deemed an "unseemly manner" the barber and the mother of the bride as well as two of her female friends had to stay in prison for two days.

Elsewhere also things were no better. In France two French boys were accused of not taking off their hats when a religious procession passed by. They were arrested. One escaped before the trial, but the other was found guilty and sentenced to having his tongue cut out, his right hand cut off and to be burned on the stake. After an appeal by the French Parliament the Church in its infinite mercy, relented and agreed to the sentence being reduced to merely cutting off the head. On July, 1776, he was executed. God's will had prevailed.

Whatever their differences, while the official Church persecuted the Protestants, they had common interest in opposing those who have tried to expose the basic Christian percepts as not originating from Jesus himself or merely pointing out that they were not logical. The case of Michael Servetus is one of such cases.

Micheal Servetus was born of a prosperous Spanish family. He had been somewhat of a rebel and fearing the Spanish Inquisition he left Spain. According to Servetus the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily led to polytheism and was therefore a diabolic delusion. He wanted Christians to forget the Christ of dogma and return to the Christ of the Bible. He called Trinity, "a three-headed monster". He accused Protestantism of having committed the serious mistakes of the dogmas formed in the third century C.E. which were the basis of later evolution of the religion. Because of the rampant persecution he, however, wrote mostly under assumed names. Once Catholic inquisitors got hold of him and he had to escape denying that his name was Servetus. He had been corresponding with Calvin who had threatened to deal with him severely. Servetus, however, took this threat lightly and actually went to see Calvin in Geneva. Calvin was at time having his own problems with his dissidents and considered Servetus an unnecessary additional irritant. He got him arrested and handed him to his own

enemies, the Catholics, to be tried and condemned to be burnt on the stakes. A wreath strewn with sulphur was placed on his head and he was lifted onto the pyre and chained to the stake. The pyre was made of half green wood and burned slowly. For half an hour his agony continued as he kept crying "Jesus, son of the eternal God, have mercy on me".

Apologists for Calvin insist that Calvin advised a simple execution. But as the Protestant Professor of Greek at Lusanne, Theodore Beza, put it "what greater more abominable crime could one find among men [than heresy?]. It would seem impossible to find a torture big enough to fit the enormity of such a misdeed". Four months after Servetus died, Calvin published his own *Declaratio Orthodoxa Fidei*: "One should forget all mankind when His glory is in question ... God does not even allow whole towns and populations to be spared, but will have the walls razed and the memory of the inhabitants destroyed and all things ruined as a sign of His utter detestation, lest the contagion spread" (Paul Johnson: *A History of Christianity*).

Servetus' execution aroused protests even from some reformers, but these had to be essentially anonymous. David Joris published his protest under a pseudonym. Three years after his death in Basle his secret was discovered. His corps was dug up and all the rites prescribed by the Inquisition for posthumous judicial procedures were employed. The body was then burnt on the stakes.

THE ANABAPTISTS

The Anabaptists grew out of the reform movement and were opposed to the practice of infant baptism. They performed baptism on adult converts (Greek ANA. again). They were pacifists who refused to bear arms or to take oaths and insisted on separation of Church and State. Since this was against the selfish interests of both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches, they persecuted the Anabaptists with equal zeal. Some of their better organized groups were the Mennonites, followers of Dutch Mennon Simon, and the Hutterites, followers of Jacob Hutter. Some of them migrated to North America, where they emerged as the Amish and Hutterite communities, and to Eastern Europe to escape persecution in their homelands.

THE QUAKERS

The Society of Friends, later to be commonly known as the Quakers, was started by George Fox in England. They too were a pacifist group and refused to bear arms. Due to intense persecution by the Catholic and Protestant Churches alike many of them migrated to North America in the footsteps of the Puritan Pilgrim Fathers. However, bigotry and persecution by other Protestant Churches followed them in the New World. William Penn. Jr. (son of the English Prime Minister of that name), himself a Quaker, established the colony of Pennsylvania but they did not find respite even in this new colony and many were killed for their faith.

THE JEWS

Long before the Jewish Revolt a large number of Jews had settled in Gentile lands. They were, however, not very popular with people with their strange requirements of cleanliness, eating habits and sense of superiority over what they considered pagan Gentiles. The Romans who ruled a vast empire, scorned at them. The Jewish Revolt made the Jewish nation not only undesirable but also suspect. The whole nation was uprooted. Cities were denuded of population. Some found refuge in remote areas. Some left Palestine and went to Africa or Asia

and other farther reaches of the empire. Wherever they went they remained suspect, and persecuted. Romans or Greeks were not the only ones who hated them. The Christians were also antagonized against them. The antagonism was mutual. When the Christian church received official patronage, here was the opportunity to punish them for what they deserved for doing what they did to Jesus. Never mind Jesus was crucified by the Roman governor but he had done this on their insistence against his own wish and his wife's admonishing. Did he not wash his hands publicly as the Gospel according to Matthew tells us? If this was written by the evangelist to placard the Romans, it was nevertheless divinely inspired. "His blood be on us, and on our children"(MT 27:25) was said by the Jews themselves. So let them have it. Christian world has been persecuting the Jews ever since. They were kept in ghettos and were particular target of medieval Inquisition as well as, alongwith Muslims, of the fearful Spanish Inquisition.

The dominican pope Paul IV(1555-59) issued a papal bull "Cum Nims" in which he said: "It is most absurd and unsuitable that the Jews, whose own crime has plunged them into everlasting slavery, under the plea that Christian magnanimity allows them, should presume to dwell and mix with the Christians not bearing any mark or distinction and should have Christian servants, yea even buy homes". Jews were therefore enclosed in ghettos and were required to wear yellow conical(dunce) hats and their women were required to wear yellow veil when outside of these walls. Under Gregory XIII(1572- 85) Jews were forced to hear a sermon every week in a church appointed specifically for them and were scourged for being inattentive. Martin Luther urged that homes and synagogues of the Jews be set on fire, that they be deprived of their prayer books and the Talmud, that rabbis be prohibited under threat of death from teaching, that passports and travel privileges of all Jews be abrogated, their rights to lend money be rescinded. He urged "let us apply the same cleverness as other nations", namely expulsion.

Here are some of the major massacres among the countless number of pogroms and slaughters that have been the fate of Europe's Jewish people:

- 1096: The Jewish massacre by Crusaders in France and Rhineland cities.
- 1104: Widespread massacres of Jews in French cities Orleans, Blois, Loches, Paris Sens and Tours.
- 1146: More massacres by the armies of the Second Crusade.
- 1234: In England, 1,240 Jews hanged for allegedly circumcising a Christian boy.
- 1239: Pope Gregory asks Christian monarchs to confiscate the Talmud.
- 1242: Twenty four cartloads of the Talmud and similar Jewish writings burnt in Paris.
- 1264: Pope Clement IV orders that the Talmud be censored, and alleged slanders against the Christian faith were struck out.
- 1278: All the Jews of England and their wives and children thrown into prison.
- 1290: Jews expelled from England by King Edward. Any Jews found to be in England after the given date were to be hanged. Property they could not sell was confiscated.
- 1349-50: Jews held responsible for the plague. Hundreds of thousands murdered. Half of Germany's Jews perished. This was followed by the official edict forcing the Jews to live together. Beginning of ghettos.
- 1353: Jews burned throughout Germany, "for it was laid to their charge that they had poisoned fountains and wells, and some, having been tortured, confessed that this was true".

- 1391: Spanish Jews offered "a choice between death and the Cross. The Jewish communities of Seville, Cordova, Toledo and dozens of other cities were almost annihilated," Those converted to Christianity were called Marranos(pigs).
- INQUISITIONS: Burning of the Jews at the stakes was called Auto-da-Fe(Act of Faith). It was the occasion for a popular holiday with spectators crowding every roof and window. "Royalty and nobility, in gala attire, sat on seats especially provided for them." ... "the tolling of the bells and the cheers of the spectators mingled with the shrieks of the dying."
- 1481-92: The Inquisition sought all sorts of victims, but most were Jews. Of the 341,000 victims, 32,000 were killed by burning, 17,659 burnt in effigy.
- 1492: Jewish expulsion from Spain completed. "Many thousands had suffered death, and perhaps ten or twenty times as many had been forced or frightened into the church. The most prosperous and populous Jewish community of Europe, a community of at least a quarter of a million people, a large number for that age, was completely destroyed."
- 1648-55: In Ukraine, Jewish "victims were flayed and burned alive ... Infants were slit like fish or slaughtered ... Women were ripped open and then sewed up again with live cats." In Russian Poland and Lithuania "Jewish lives taken during the decade were estimated at 100,000."
- 1812-24: A famine in white Russia was blamed on Jews. 20,000 were expelled.
- 1860: More than 200,000 Jews expelled from Russia to Poland.
- 1881-1894: Pogroms begin. (Pogrom is a Russian word meaning "riot"). They were centrally organised first under Tsar Alexander. His theory was: "a third might be converted, a third emigrate, a third perish". In one year (1881) alone, there were 100 pogroms.
- 1903: Pogroms in Besserbia. On Easter Sunday, the last day of Passover, with the church bells tolling numerous bands roamed the streets. "From their hiding places and garrets, the Jews were dragged forth and tortured to death. Many mortally wounded were denied the finishing stroke and left to perish in their agony; in not a few cases nails were driven into the skulls and eyes gouged out."

Summing up the Jewish people's experience in Europe and the persecution it had suffered, Solomon Grayzel(A History of the Jews pp.812) makes a most profound observation that seems to clinch the issue. "Jewish life in Europe was not a failure. Europe had failed; western civilisation had failed".

Nazi effort for the final solution to the Jewish problem was only an extension of Jewish persecution encouraged by the Official Church at Rome which itself sided with Mussolini's Fascism.

While all this was happening to the Jews in Christian lands they fared much better living with the Muslims. Abba Eban, a former Israeli Foreign Minister wrote("My People"): "Under Muslim rule, world Jewry entered into a new period of physical and intellectual expansion ... The Jews not only retained their ancestral creed but gained new strength in the lands of the Muslim conquest". It is yet another matter that due to the sinister human trait to bite the hand that feeds, the Jews usurped the land of the Palestinians and continue to oppress and expel mostly Muslim Arabs from their own homeland.

THE RISE OF ISLAM

The Church had hardly resolved its controversy over Unitarian heresy when it faced a forceful challenge from an unexpected direction. In 570 C.E. in a remote place in southern Arabia called Mecca, a child was born whose father had died a few months before his birth. The orphan's grandfather gave him an unusual name MUHAMMAD (Blessings of Allah and Peace be on him). The name meant 'the praised one' and when asked about this strange and unusual name, the grandfather proclaimed that he felt that his orphan grandson will indeed become a great man. Fourteen hundred years later a Christian historian would call him the "World's Most Influential Person" (Michael H.Hart: The 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History).

At the age of 40 years Muhammad(B) declared that he had received a revelation in the manner of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other true prophets (Peace be on them). His message was simple and straight-forward: "there is no god, except one and only God, 'Allah', Alone, without partners or sharers of his divine powers, Unbegotten, Eternal". He called his religion "Islam", meaning "peace" which also meant "submission". Thus Islam teaches 'peace through submission to the will of God". Muhammad(B) claimed no supernatural powers or status for himself except that God Almighty had chosen him to deliver the message which was similar to those of the patriarchs Abraham(P) and Moses(P).

With its forceful emphasis on the Unity of God, universality of religion and brotherhood of mankind, the religion of Islam also accepted the divine origin of Torah (in its original form!) and of Jesus(P) Gospel. It was, however, contended that over the period the message of God had been misunderstood and corrupted by later generations. The Jews and Christians were accepted as the people of the Book and to be preferred to pagans and fireworshippers. Christians of Abyssinia found a close resemblance in Islam to their own beliefs and provided a safe haven to Muslims fleeing from persecution from their own pagan relatives and neighbors.

Islam with its simplicity of doctrine and practice spread far and wide like no other religion had ever done before. Reaching beyond the borders of Arabia it came in contact with remnants of various Christian Unitarians. Persecuted as they were by their own co-religionists, they embraced Islam as being direct confirmation of their own stand. This was all the more alarming to the Christian empires to the North. "With this new religion arose an Empire greater than any of the four so famed Monarchies, erected in a poor barren Country, hemm'd in between two great and potent Princes, one reigning over the Eastern Christians, the other over the Persians, and which very much augments the wonder, all this was accomplished in the compass of a very few years, by a man of a mean State, feircely opposed and slenderly befriended" (Henry Stubbe: Rise and Progress of Mahometanism. pp. 2).

In the on-going wars between the fire-worshipping Persians and the Christians the Muslim sympathies were with the Christians but their friendly overtures were turned down out of hand. Rather, Christian tribes with tacit approval of the Byzantine empire attacked the Muslim tribes in their neighborhood. An expeditionary force of only about 3000 Muslims under the command of Khalid Bin Walid attacked the Christian forces numbering two hundred thousand under the command of Emperor Hercules himself at a Syrian border post of Muta inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. A new force had emerged and needed to be reckoned with.

Muslim conquests in Asia and Egypt followed rapidly. In the 7th century C.E. forces of the second Caliph Omar conquered Palestine. Omar decided to visit Jerusalem, which was considered holy by Muslims themselves beside the Jews and the Christians. Omar travelled

with just one camel and a servant. Omar and the servant took turns riding the camel and when they reached the gates of Jerusalem it had been the servant's turn to be on the camel so that the head of state of the conquering forces met the welcoming delegation holding the reins of the camel his servant was riding on. As the time of prayers arrived Omar was visiting one of the churches and was offered a place there to worship. He appreciated the offer but decided to pray elsewhere saying that he did not want to create precedent lest later generations turn it into a right. With such gestures he won the confidence and obedience of the Christians who were now his subjects so that for the next four centuries there was harmony and peace between different religious groups in the Holy Land. Christian pilgrims came from all over the known world and enjoyed the unhindered practice of their faith sometimes not possible even in their own Christian lands.

THE CRUSADES

Besides the political challenge that the advance of Islam posed to the Christian lands the Official Church obviously felt threatened by the now flourishing new religion with its emphasis on the Unity of God. To adapt to this new challenge Pope Honorius found himself supporting the doctrine of "one mind" on the ground that if God had three independent minds, the result ought to be indecision or chaos. The logical conclusion pointed to the belief in the existence of One God and a clear denial of Trinity of three Co-equals. After his death a council held in Constantinople half a century later anathematized Honorius. This is a unique case in history when a Pope, the Mouth-piece of God, was denounced as heretic by a succeeding Pope and his Church! His case is, however, not considered against the principle of infallibility of Popes on the ground that Honorius in this case was not speaking 'ex cathedra'.

Although direct threat from advancing Muslim onslaught was faced by the Byzantine Empire and the Eastern Church located in Constantinople, the Catholic Church of the west located in Rome took it on itself to challenge the Muslims for its own purposes. This had been made necessary by several factors. The reign of terror let loose by the Church in curbing the heresy had succeeded as far as France and something was needed to keep the faith of the masses. The strangle-hold being felt by the ruling princes had given rise to a silent opposition to the power of the Church. The Church had, therefore, to direct the people's attention away from the excesses of the Church to extraneous matters. There was also an economic necessity in that Muslims were now straddled across the trade routes and something had to be done to remove this hurdle.

The Holy Land now ruled by the Muslims had been an example of tolerance and peace for almost four centuries and Christians had enjoyed unhindered access to their holy places. In the 11th century C.E. it was alleged that the Holy Sepulcher had been profaned by the Muslims. The Church took it on itself to rouse its followers to hysterical pitch. In the meantime the Seljuk Turks, who had taken over the Holy Land from the Egyptian Caliphs defeated the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV at Miniskirt in 1071 C.E. The Western Church may have been rather happy on this disgrace of its rival and no help was afforded to the Eastern empire. However, aroused by its own needs the Catholic Church responded to the appeal by the later emperor Alexius I. Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095 C.E. exhorted his followers to dislodge the 'infidels of Mahomet' and restore the sanctity of the Holy Land.

The First Crusade, so named on account of the crosses that were given at the Council, was preached all over Europe. All those taking part in this holy expedition were promised full penance from their sins. A large variety of groups enthusiastically responded to the call. Banishment was a frequent reason for going to the Holy wars. The haughty Fulk Fitzwarren so

angered Prince John in a chess game that John hit him over the head with the chessboard, whereupon Fulk retaliated with a blow that almost killed the bad-tempered prince. Promptly banished from court, he set off for Palestine. One Osborne Gifford who was excommunicated for abducting two nuns (one was apparently not enough) had to undertake a three years crusade as the price of absolution. Another, John de Camays sold his whole estate to the abbey of Combe in Warwickshire for three hundred and twenty marks sterling. Others mortgaged their lands, usually to rich abbeys, for three, or four or seven years, and if they survived the wars to return home, they were often too impoverished to redeem their property and were forced to spend out their lives as poor brethren in a monastery. The Church was in fact the main beneficiary as it made money whether someone went to the Crusades or decided to stay home. People were edged on to vow to go the Palestine and then granted absolutions on payment.

The call for help from Constantinople determined the focal point for convergence of the Crusaders. The Crusaders came forward as disorganized hordes and with no logistic support they became more and more unruly. The French peasants under Walter the Penniless passed through Germany and Hungary rather peacefully and lived mostly on the charity of the local people. But by the time they reached Belgrade they became unruly and sacked the whole region. The Bulgarians hit back and the horde of Walter disintegrated into small bands by the time they reached Constantinople. Same fate was met by the crusaders under Peter the Hermit. The contingent of the German peasants started massacre of Jews in Rhenish cities early on their journey. By the time they reached Hungary, they so provoked the local people that they fell on them dispersing them also into small bands by the time they reached Constantinople. The composition, character and behaviour of these Holy Crusaders, who were now joined by thieves, murderers and other shady characters seeking forgiveness for their sins, so frightened the Byzantine emperor Alexius I that he arranged for their quick transportation to Asia Minor where many of them fell to the Turkish onslaughts.

The first wave of Crusaders was followed by more organised forces under European princes. They too were suspect to the Byzantinians as indeed some had come to overtake the territories controlled by the Eastern Church which was rival to the Catholic Church. Through great statesmanship and material help Alexius I was able to induce the Crusaders to march toward their goal in the Holy Land. Turks suffered many setbacks and eventually Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders in 1095 C.E.

As the Muslim forces were withdrawing it was a sad day for the local Christians who had the foreknowledge of the Church excesses in Europe and the character and conduct of the Holy Crusaders enroute. The looting and rape, on Muslims, Jews and Christians alike, perpetrated by these Crusaders bore no connection to their holy purpose. As H.G. Wells recorded: "The slaughter was terrible; the blood of the conquered ran down the streets, until men splashed in blood as they rode. At nightfall, sobbing for excess of joy, the Crusaders came to the Sepulcher from their treading of the wine-press, and put their bloodstained hands together in prayers". The immense and horrible carnage of men, women and children and the savage scourging and violation of virgins were a common occurrence during this and the later Crusades enough to lower the head in shame by any man with a conscience. Every habitation from marble palace to the meanest hovel was converted into shamble; the narrow streets and the spacious squares all alike ran with human blood.

"They do not seem to have discriminated between Christians and Muslims. Thus in the villages attacked around Nicaea by Peter the Hermit's band, non-Latin Christians were slaughtered in great numbers, and their babies roasted on spits. When cities fell, even to regular crusader forces, it was customary to kill some at least of the non-Latin inhabitants, irrespective

of their religion. Hideous massacres of Moslems and Jews, men, women and even of Christians of darker colour or of odd looking garments were a common pass-time of marauding Crusaders. At times ordinary European Christians suffered grievously because the holy crusaders needed their belongings to sustain their march toward the Holy Land. When Caesarea was taken in 1101 C.E. the troops were given permission to sack it as they pleased, and all the Moslems were killed in the Great Mosque; there was similar massacre at Beirut. Such episodes punctuated the crusades from start to finish. In 1168 C.E. during the Frankish campaign in Egypt, there were systematic massacres; those killed included many Christian Copts, and the effect was to unite Egyptians of all religions (and races) against the crusaders. In 1182 there were even raids on the Moslem Red Sea pilgrim routes in which, to the horror of Islam, a crowded pilgrim ship was sunk with all aboard. When Tripoli fell in 1109 C.E. the Genoese sailors destroyed the Banu Ammar library, the finest in the Moslem world" (Paul Johnson: A History of Christianity). "To the majority of the Christian warriors Moslems were simply unbelievers who had no right to existence, with whom no faith need be kept, and who might be slaughtered without ruth or pity to the glory of the Christian God. Most of the Crusaders seem to have held the view that nothing could be done with the infidels except to exterminate them, or to reduce them to permanent slavery. As unbelievers they were destined for hell anyway; and, if they were allowed to live, this could only be because of the services that they might be able to render to faithful Christians" (Stephen Neill: A History of Christian Missions). In one of the Crusades while Antioch was being besieged the Holy Crusaders cut off the heads of 500 Muslim prisoners and displayed them prominently on poles. As the siege continued two hundred of these heads were catapulted over the city to intimidate the Muslim defenders.

The conquering princes created the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem along with smaller dependencies of the Counties of Edessa and Tripoli and the Principality of Antioch. The Crusaders returned home leaving these small states to fend for themselves. However, chivalrous holy orders of Knights Hospitalers and Knights Templars were created to assist the new states. In fact waves of armed pilgrims and adventurers continued for over two centuries, sometimes organised and sometimes without set aims.

The Seljuq ruler Zangi took back Edessa in 1144 C.E. and this caused the Second Crusade to be preached by St. Bernard of Clairvoux. This Crusade was led by Emperor Conrad III and King Louis VII of France. Passing out of the Balkans, these armies pillaged the Byzantine territory. Using his own cunning diplomacy, bribe and threat of retaliation, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I managed to rid of these armies by transporting them to Asia Minor. The waiting Turks made a short course of them. It is also suspected that the Latin princes of Jerusalem, being afraid of the sack of their territories conspired the failure of this Second Crusade. In fact such cooperation between Muslim and Christian princes was not uncommon on both sides of the conflict. The defeated Conrad returned home in 1148 C.E. followed by Louis in 1149 C.E.

The Turks now regrouped under the banner of Salahuddin Ayyubi (Saladin the Great) and captured Jerusalem in 1187 C.E. This caused the Third Crusade to be preached by Pope Gregory VIII and was led by Richard I of England, Philip II of France and Emperor Frederick I in 1189 C.E. By now the Byzantines had grown wiser toward the real threat that they could expect from their Christian brothers and forged an alliance with Salahuddin. Frederick forced his way to Bosphorus and on to the Asia Minor. He died in Cilicia in 1190 C.E. Richard and Philip moved toward Acre in 1191 C.E. which was already under a prolonged siege by local chieftains. Philip returned home when the city fell due to starvation. Richard stayed back and concluded a truce with Salahuddin who out of his own generosity guaranteed free access to Holy

Sepulcher to Christians. On his way back Richard "the Lion Hearted" was held hostage by Christian princes and had to be ransomed by his country.

Richard may have been a Maccabee in valor, strength, and strategy, but not in motive. He fought for fun, not for liberty, that is, in Palestine. The rest, perhaps ninety percent, of his adult life he spent fighting up and down France against his father or the French king or some other feudal rival, but all this is forgotten in the brighter memory of his Crusade ... A truce and exchange of prisoners was arranged with Saladin, of which the conditions were to be fulfilled at stated intervals over a three months period. But when Saladin kept delaying the fulfillment of his part, Richard without compunction slaughtered more than two thousand Moslem prisoners. This ruthless act, which appalled even his own army, has provoked shudders of horror and righteous indignation among latter day historians (who) tend to picture him rather as a remorseless, kindless villain" (Barbara W. Tuchman: Bible and Sword).

Richard inherited his flamboyant style from his mother Eleanor of Aquitaine. Full of passion of temper and body she became the queen of Louis VII of France and accompanied her husband to the Holy Land on the Second Crusade in male martial attire. Neglected by the King she allowed herself a few lovers including her uncle Raymond of Poitiers. Foreseeing a possible divorce on the basis of infidelity she sought an annulment on flimsy ground of distant blood relationship. The Church acquiesced to avoid scandal. She then enticed Henry Plantagenet, heir to the throne of England, eleven years her junior. In 1154 C.E. she became "Queen of England by the wrath of God" according to her own rhetoric, as the consort of Henry II. Henry equally matched the passion of temper and body of his queen and the love soon soured into hot jealousies. Even though she fled to Aquitaine, he had her pursued, arrested and imprisoned. She languished in confinement for sixteen years until Henry's death when Richard inherited the throne.

What did England know him as a king? A towering red haired, sword-rattling apparition with the furious temper who scraped into the treasury every extractable penny to finance his crusade. He was hardly an Englishman, his queen never set foot in England and he himself spent no more than seven months of his twelve years reign in the country whose crown he wore. He was gone in such a hurry that England was hardly aware of him except as a tidal wave of taxation poured over them and returned only to pour over them again when he had to be ransomed from the prison of the emperor to whom Leopold of Austria had surrendered him.

In 1198 C.E. Pope Innocent III hastily organised the Fourth Crusade, the reason for which remains unclear. The Crusaders led by French and Flemish nobles assembled at Venice and rather than suffering from lack of funds the expedition succumbed to Venetian pressure and the lure of financial help from Alexius, an exiled pretender to the Byzantine empire, who also promised to merge the Eastern Church with the Roman Church in return for helping him take over the empire. The Holy Crusaders stormed Constantinople and sacked the then most beautiful and extensive city in the Christian world. "When Constantinople was taken to the honour of God, the Pope and the empire, the soldiers were told they could pillage for three days. In St. Sophia the hangings were torn down and the great silver iconostasis was wrenched into pieces and pocketed. A prostitute was put upon the Patriarch's throne and sang a rude French song. Sacred books and ikons were trampled under foot, nuns were raped and the soldiers drank the altar wine out of the chalices" (Paul Johnson: A History of Christianity). According to the Encyclopedia of Religion: "The pillage of Constantinople by the Crusaders is something that the Orthodox East has never forgotten or forgiven. If any single date is to be cited for the firm establishment of the schism, the most appropriate at any rate from the psychological standpoint is the year 1204 (C.E.)."

A senseless outcome of the Fourth Crusade was the Children's Crusade. Driven by religious frenzy and whipped on by a young French peasant boy, Stephen of Cloy, thousands of innocent French and German boys dreamed of achieving what their elders had shamefully betrayed. They embarked at Marseilles in 1212 C.E. Unscrupulous skippers left them on unknown shores or sold them into slavery. Another group of German boys led by a boy known only as Nicholas went eastward by land but most of them perished of fatigue, hunger and disease. Stragglers were eaten by wolves.

Not satisfied with the blood-letting already caused by his preaching, Innocent III exhorted king of Hungary, Duke Leopold VI of Austria and John of Brienne to lead the Fifth Crusade in 1217 C.E. This was aimed against Egypt, then the centre of Muslim power. The Crusaders took Damietta in 1219 C.E. and proceeded toward Cairo when they were defeated and had also to abandon Damietta in 1221 C.E.

The Sixth Crusade (1228-29) was led by Emperor Fredrick II of Hohenstaufen, who had previously been himself subject to a crusade by Pope Gregory IX and been ex-communicated. This started as a peaceful visit in which he concluded a truce with the Muslims and secured a partial control over Jerusalem. When Fredrick crowned himself King of Jerusalem the Muslims retook the city. This led to expedition by Thibault IV of Navarre and Champagne in 1239 C.E. and Richard of Cornwall in 1240 C.E. However, there was dissension between Knights Templars and Knights Hospitalers. The Templars advocated a truce with Sultan of Damascus against the Memelukes of Egypt. The Templars prevailed on the ground that this would divide the Muslims. As a result the Sultan of Damascus ceded Palestine to the Christians in 1244 C.E. but the Memelukes routed the Crusaders at Gaza and retook Palestine.

Seventh Crusade in 1148-54 C.E. was led by Louis IX of France against Egypt but was unsuccessful and later led to the Eighth Crusade in 1270 C.E. which fizzled out on the death of Louis IX. The Ninth Crusade was led by prince Edward in 1271-72 C.E. who returned after concluding a truce with the Muslims. The last Christian stronghold of Tripoli and Acre fell in 1289 and 1291 C.E. That was the end of the Crusades although many were preached.

Repeated defeats of the Crusaders at the hand of the Muslims were not the only reason for conclusion of the Crusades. Europeans had come to realise the futility of it all. Eastern Church had been completely alienated and instead of inflicting losses on the "infidel followers of Mahomet" the Crusaders had plundered Christian lands. The exhortations of the Popes had lost their appeal. On the other hand the Europeans discovered that the Muslims were after all not the barbarians as they had been pictured. With the light from the East soon the love of learning of arts, sciences and philosophy missing from the European scene and especially stifled by the Church, blossomed through exchanges with the Muslims. This would eventually lead to Renaissance. The yearning for route to India and the art of navigation learnt from the Muslims would take Columbus to the Americas. Eventually this also led to challenges to papal authority and Reformation. Crusades also left the Eastern Empire weak and at the mercy of the Muslims who captured Constantinople in 1453 C.E.

"Possibly some of the Crusaders had learned in the East a new tolerance for sexual perversions; this and the introduction of public baths and private latrines in the West may be included among the results of the Crusades The compass, gunpowder, and printing were known in the East before the Crusades ended, and may have come to Europe in the backwash of that tidal wave. Apparanly the Crusaders were too unlettered to care for "Arabic" poetry, science, or philosophy; Moslem influences in such fields came rather through Spain and Sicily than through the contacts of these wars"(Will Durant: History of Civilization, vol IV — Age of Faith, pp.611).

As a reaction to the Roman "decadence" the early Christians, consisting mostly of the poor and the slaves, especially in Europe, took objection to their way of living including baths and general cleanliness. Filthiness was then associated with piety and humility. "Saints" prided in the boast that they never had a bath during their entire life. "It is apparent that the early Church was thronged with evil smelling creatures who were proud of peculiarly offensive virtues such as never washing their feet, changing their clothes, or cutting their nails. At a time when nobody, however eccentric, could be very clean it was difficult but important for saints to emphasize that they could be even more unpleasant than the general population... while some crusaders and their wives were adopting the manners of the Near East the Church became even more restrictive toward the bulk of the population. This was a period when the peasants were restive and the only authority which the church could ultimately wield was the threat of the hell fire. Like the later Puritans, the writers of period poured wrath on any inclination to dress attractively, let alone paint the face" (Maggie Angeloglu: *A History of Make-up*, Studio Vista, Ltd., London, 1970). It is said that genital diseases greatly decreased in Europe after the adoption of cotton underwear which could be washed more frequently. This too happened after contacts with the Muslims in the Holy Land and in Spain.

In contrast to the Christian behaviour the Muslim attitude towards the Christians was very different, more civilized, as shown in the following quotations: "Under the Abbasid Caliphs (eighth to thirteenth centuries) who were setting themselves to bring into existence the brilliant Muslim civilization of Baghdad, and who had need of their educated Christian subjects to help them in their projects, Christians were protected and favoured, and some attained to high place under the Muslim rulers" (Stephen Neil: *A History of Christian Missions*). Caliph Mutawakkil (846-861 C.E.) is often accused of harsh treatment of Christians yet "no Christians appear to have been executed for their faith at this time, as Ishudad of Merv, writing about the same period, mentions no recent martyrs ... It is again interesting to remark that inspite of these anti-Christian measures, Mutawakkil retained his Christian physicians, a detail which shows that Christians were still ranking high in learned and professional capacities" (Aubrey Vine: *The Nestorian Churches*). The same author also refers to restrictions on practicing of Christianity under later Caliphs: "It is true that such restrictions must have been very irksome, and that at times it cost a great deal in the way of patience and pride to be a Christian. But irksome is hardly to be ranked with persecution, and it is significant that while Mari mentions trials and woes in a general way, the items he particularizes are not specially or exceptionally grievous — they are just the expected lot of melets" "It is true, of course, that hate breeds hate, bitterness bitterness. The Saracens were just as happy, and in their own judgment equally well justified, when they had the opportunity of slaughtering Christian unbelievers. And so, for the two centuries that elapsed between the first conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, and the loss of the last Crusader stronghold at Acre in 1291, the Mediterranean world was darkened by an ever more sombre cloud of hatred, all the more disastrous because this hate was conjured up in the name of Christ. The Crusaders left a trail of bitterness across the relations between Christians and Muslims that remains as a living factor in the world situation in the present day" (Aubrey Vine: *Op. Cit.*)

"Many westerners, accustomed by their history books to believe that Muslims were barbarous infidels, find it difficult to comprehend how profoundly our intellectual life has been influenced by Muslim scholars in the field of science, medicines, mathematics, geography and philosophy. Crusaders who invaded the Holy Land to fight Muslims returned to Europe with new ideas of love, poetry, chivalry, warfare and government. Our concept of what a university should be was deeply modified by Muslim scholars, who perfected the writing of history and

who brought to Europe much Greek learning" (James A. Michener: *Islam, The Misunderstood Religion*, Reader's Digest, American Edition, May 1955).

"They [The Muslims] were no blood-thirsty savages, bent solely on loot and destruction. On the contrary, they were an innately gifted race, eager to learn and appreciative of the cultural gifts which older civilisation had to bestow. Inter-marriage freely and professing a common belief, conquerors and conquered rapidly fused, and from this fusion arose a new civilisation, the Saracene civilisation, in which the ancient cultures of Greece, Rome and Persia were revitalised by the Arab genius and the Islamic spirit. For the first three centuries of its existence (Circa 650-1000 C.E.) the realm of Islam was the most civilised and progressive portion of the world. Studded with splendid cities, gracious mosques, and great universities where the wisdom of the ancient world was preserved and appreciated, the Muslim world offered a striking contrast to the Christian West, then sunk in the night of the Dark Ages" (Lotirop Stoddard: *The New World of Islam*, London, 1932).

Christian historians claim that the Crusades put Islam on the defensive, thus delaying the Turkish advance by 200 years. Muslim historians assert that the Ottoman advance into Europe was a Turkish retaliation for what the crusaders did to the Muslims on this side of the Mediterranean. However, both sides agree that the Crusades led to the confluence of two great civilisations and cultures which basically had common roots. The Crusades did not merely mean movement of armies; they led to the intermingling of populations on a colossal scale. Living in the Levant for 200 years had brought about definite cultural and racial changes among the crusaders: they became gradually orientalisised and developed an outlook that was different from that of Europe.

When the areas inhabited by the Turks were absorbed in the Muslim cultural milieu, the area underwent pronounced racial and cultural changes. Anatolia and the Aegean seaboard were in any case inhabited by Greeks and Armenians. The large-scale migrations and settlements by Turkish tribes and the intermingling with the local populations gave rise to a new race that spoke Turkish, had Islamic faith but was highly Aryanised, and since military service was restricted to Muslims, a large number of Greeks became Muslim to enter the Ottoman army. Often the defeated crusaders had no means for returning to Europe, settled down in the Levant and mixed with the local population. The result is the variety of facial features that we see today in most Muslim countries of the Mediterranean.

However, the real and most decisive—and perhaps perverse—impact of the Crusades was on the European mind. Europe has never forgiven Islam for its humiliation in the Crusades. The Muslim conquest of Spain was a "local" affair, and the conflict did not involve entire Europe. But the Crusades involved the whole of Europe, and all its strata of population. Leopold Weiss, a Hungarian Jewish scholar who converted to Islam, thinks the Crusades had an extraordinary impact on Europe because they had occurred in Europe's "childhood."

In many cases the returning Crusaders did not find a warm welcome or even an acknowledgment of their sufferings in the cause of the Church and Christ. In the case of Knights Templars King Philip IV ordered their arrest "and the royal seal was set on all their goods. Philip accused them of indulging in homosexual lusts, of having lost their Christian faith through long contact with Islam, of denying Christ and spitting upon the cross, of worshipping idols, of being in secret league with the Moslems, and of having repeatedly betrayed the Christian cause. A tribunal of prelates and monks loyal to the king examined the prisoners; they denied the royal charges and were put to the torture to induce them to confess. Some, suspended by the wrists, were repeatedly drawn up and suddenly let down; some had their bare feet held over flames; some had sharp splinters driven under their fingernails; some

had a tooth wrenched out day after day; some had heavy weights hung from their genitals; some were slowly starved. In many cases all these devices were used, so that most of the prisoners, when examined again, were weak to the point of death. One showed the bones that had fallen from his roasted feet" (Will Durant: History of Civilization, vol. IV - - Age of Faith, pp. 610).

At the end of World War I the British General Allenby after entering Jerusalem declared that Crusades had now ended. With the Balfour Declaration Jews were promised a homeland in Palestine.

THE CONTINUING CRUSADES

Although the Crusades fizzled out during the 13th century C.E. the crusade spirit has persisted in the Christian mind against the Muslims. Throughout history to the Christian "the only good Saracen is the dead Saracen". This remains so in the modern "enlightened era". Christian prejudice against Islam became so deep-rooted that it affected the thinking of the best minds in the Christian West. In his "Divine Comedy" Dante put the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the inferno, torn to pieces by pigs. In 1742 C. E. Voltaire made a grotesque presentation of the Holy Prophet in his play "Muhamet". William Gladstone as the then British Prime Minister pronounced his judgment in the House of Commons: "So long as there is this book [The Holy Quran], there will be no peace in the world". Yet he admitted that he had not read it. In our own time the Christian West has promoted the trash against Prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and Peace be upon Him) and Islam by use of pseudo-Muslims like Salman Rushdie to malign Islam. Muslim religion and tradition continue to be a target of derogatory attitude and behaviour even among modern "liberal", enlightened, Christians. In France when the Muslim female students wanted to wear the scarf on their heads, a religious requirement, the Minister of Education specifically intervened to prohibit its use ostensibly because it will give them a distinct (non-Christian) entity. So much for modern, liberal, enlightened French system, which it seems would prefer to have nudity rather than allow modesty in spite of the rules laid down by none other than Paul: "If the woman be not covered let her be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn let her be covered" (1 Cor 11:6).

After the break-up of the communist U.S.S.R. and its repercussions on other states in Eastern Europe, the Western (Christian) sympathies have been demonstrably with the European areas of Christian influence. Hordes of Christian evangelists have descended on European republics loaded with free Bibles and money. As for the Asian republics efforts have been directed toward suppressing the aspirations of the local Muslim population for religious revival dubbing them as "fundamentalists".

The Christian partiality is exposed in the treatment of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Whereas the Serbians and Croats belong to the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic faiths they are referred to as Serbs and Croats while the third party in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina are referred to simply as "Muslims". Whereas the whole world witnessed the aggression from the Serbian army having access to almost all of the arms of the former Yugoslavian army, the arms embargo was placed against all the parties of the conflict including the Muslims who were actually the aggrieved party desperately in need of arms to save themselves from total annihilation by the Christian Serbs. Muslims have been subjected to planned genocide, rounded up in concentration camps and systematically pushed out of their homes to wither in refugee camps. Yet when the West decided to stop the carnage all it had to do was just show its intent to do so.

It is unfortunate that even after fifty years of the "holocaust" the world has not come to grips with the "ethnic cleansing". This is not surprising if we consider that even after seven centuries of "enlightenment" the Christian mind has not shed its crusading spirit against Muslims as is shown by the Western (Christian) attitude of bias against Muslim causes whether it is in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnia, Kashmir, Palestine or other problems confronting Muslims in our own age at the end of the Twentieth Century. If Muslims seek deliverance from injustice and tyranny they are themselves dubbed as "terrorists", even "Muslim terrorists". Religiously-oriented Muslims are derogatorily called "fundamentalist" and "Islamist". Yet terrorism of the Irish Republican Army is NOT termed as "Christian terrorism" or "Catholic terrorism".

While India, South Africa and Israel are known to have nuclear capabilities, no eyebrows have been raised. While India is openly defiant, it is Muslim Pakistan which is threatened with "dire consequences" if it wants to develop deterrent nuclear technology. Its access to nuclear technology even for power generation is also denied. No one seems to be bothered by a "Christian" Bomb, or a "Hindu" Bomb, or a "Jewish" Bomb, or the Communist Bomb. But an "Islamic Bomb" seems to be a cause for concern. The feeling is growing among Muslims that such a partial attitude is a legacy of the Crusades. This is hardly conducive to a healthy relationship between the two great religious communities. Unless we learn to be even-handed peace on earth will not be assured.

CHAPTER XVIII

SPANISH INQUISITION AND THE MUSLIMS

The Muslims arrived in Spain in the early part of the eighth century at a time the Holy Catholic Church and the State had forged close relationship and common interests. The Church had by this time been able to completely annihilate its Unitarian opponents who believed in Divine Unity rather than the doctrine of Trinity developed by the Catholic Church by absorbing Roman and pagan beliefs and Greek philosophy. The medieval inquisition in Europe had already set a pattern of burning on the stake of 'heretics' as the Official Church called its opponents. The Catharii of France, the Donatists and Arians of North Africa, and Europe, and other Unitarians had all been eliminated by ruthless killing without consideration of any mercy or tolerance.

The Jews had been a particular target of persecution by the Official Church ever since the sun-worshiper Roman emperor Constantine became the patron of Christianity without converting himself to this faith. In Spain in 616 C.E. it was decreed that all Jews must give up their faith and become Christians. Those who refused were to be banished after receiving a hundred lashes and head shaven. In practice, however, no one was allowed to leave Spain. More than 90,000 Jews were forcibly baptized, and once baptized they became subject to Inquisition. In 694 C.E. it was decreed that all unconverted Jews were to be sold into slavery, except children under seven years of age, who were to be brought up as Christians. Marriages between Jews were forbidden. They were forbidden to become merchants or own property. When the Jews revolted, they were ruthlessly killed.

Muslims arrived in Spain in the year 711 C.E. only 92 years after Hijra (the beginning of the Muslim lunar calendar). The invitation to invade the Iberian Peninsula actually came from the Christians themselves who had become tired of the tyrannical role of Church which supported a corrupt monarchy, sharing in its loot. The Muslim governor of North Africa, Musa, deputed a young commander Tariq bin Zayyad to attack Spain with a small army estimated between twelve and seventeen thousand. When Tariq and his army landed at what is now known as Gibraltar (Jabl-al-Tariq) he burnt all the boats that brought them in and declared that now the choice before them was simple: Victory, or death in the way of Allah. The Spanish monarch Roderick marched at the head of 100,000 cavalry in great splendour. As the Muslims attacked their vastly superior foes, the rout of the enemy was incomprehensible even to them. In fact the victory was made easy by the fact that many of the enemy soldiers, which included many Jews, secretly practicing Unitarians and common serfs, preferred to be captives of the Muslims, the word of whose bravery, chivalry and tolerance had preceded them. Nothing is known about what happened to Roderick. Probably he drowned in the marshes near the battle-field.

THE UMAYYADS

Soon Andalus (Arabic for 'Spring') bloomed into a radiant civilization unique in Europe under the able and tolerant rule of Abdu-r-Rehman I and his successors. Abdu-r-Rehman was the scion of the Umayyad dynasty which had recently been deposed by the Abbasids. The arrival of Muslims and the ensuing peace gave Andalusia a whiff of fresh air. All people were allowed the right to worship according to their will and free choice. "The government, be it said to its honour, conducted itself with the greatest justice towards the Christians who had

capitulated" (Dozy: Hist. des Noms des Vetements Chez les Arabes). Jews and other persecuted people converged in Andalusia and made it rich with their contribution to that of the Muslims themselves. The period that followed is the best that Spain has ever had. The following description is illuminating:

"Europe was darkened at sunset, Cordoba shone with public lamps; Europe was dirty, Cordoba built a thousand baths; Europe was covered with vermin, Cordoba changed its undergarments daily; Europe lay in mud, in Cordoba the streets were paved; Europe's palaces had smoke-holes in the ceiling, Cordoba's arabesques were exquisite; Europe's nobility could not sign its name, Cordoba's children went to school, Europe's monks could not read the baptismal services, Cordoba's teachers created a library of Alexandrian dimensions."

The Muslims of Spain created the most developed civilization of the time. "They developed many industries textiles, pottery, paper and sugar refining and opened important mines of gold, silver and other metals. Wool and silk were manufactured in Cordova, Malaga and Almeira, pottery in Malaga and Valencia, arms in Cordova and Toledo, leather in Cordova, carpets in Beza and Calceña, paper (an Arab introduction from the Far East) in Jativa and Valencia. As elsewhere in Islam textiles were the chief industry, and we hear of 13,000 weavers in Cordova alone. Muslim Spain carried an extensive foreign trade with the East, and merchant fleets based on the Andalusian ports carried Spanish goods all over the Mediterranean" (Bernard Lewis: The Arabs in History, Harper Colophone Books, New York, 1966, pp. 127). The Muslim influence in Spain generated taste for luxury in the barbarous Europe. Priests and princes wore rich Spanish cloth often adorned with the Muslim cantation "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger" which, of course the illiterate elite thought to be a mere decoration.

To supply the textile industry Cotton(al-Coton) was introduced, as was sugarcane. Apricots, peaches, pomegranates (Pom des Granada), lemons, oranges adorned the dining tables. Olives(az-zaitun), saffron(az zafran), egg plant(Berenjina) and other new introductions added to the culinary pleasure. Wheat as well as a number of new grains were promoted. The Spanish language was enriched with new ideas and thought; poetry, art and scientific knowledge. Even after centuries of "cleansing", the large number of words with Arabic/Moorish roots stand testimony to that enrichment.

The description of Az-Zehra palace that has not survived, and the grandeur of the Mosque of Cordoba, which still stands as a monument to those who built it, point to an unusually prosperous and bountiful State. There are not many of such monuments left, such has been the systematic destruction of whatever was Muslim or anything to do with them. The total elimination of Muslims of Spain is one of the goriest of tales in the history of the world.

The great flowering of the Muslim civilization which began in 711 C.E. lasted about three hundred years. There was peace and prosperity in the country. While in the rest of Europe 'heretics' and 'witches' were being mercilessly burnt on stakes, complete religious freedom prevailed for all Muslims, Christians, as well as the Jews and this contributed to the flourishing of the people. As usually happens, the prosperity and peace made the people of Andalusia complacent and relaxed. There were naturally rivalries and conspiracies within the Muslim elite. Sensing the impending collapse of unity amongst the Muslims the Christian rulers at their borders began incursions into the lands ruled by the Muslims. In spite of the long spell of peace and prosperity the Catholic Church stealthily instructed its followers within Muslim lands to hasten the fall of the Muslims. The great Umayyad ruler Al-Mansoor had to undertake as many as fifty two expeditions to face these incursions.

After Al-Mansoor the unity of Muslims did not last long and many contenders arose so that "there were as many Sultans in Andalusia as the number of secure castles and towns". Some of these sought the help of their Christian neighbours against their Muslim adversaries to save themselves but at the expense of other Muslim towns. Soon the Church organised the "Burgundian Crusade" in 1017 C.E. In every battle, after every gain, Muslims were picked out and slaughtered by the thousands. Barbastro fell in 1062 C.E. and even though a peace treaty had been signed the Holy Christian army massacred the local Muslims immediately afterwards. Conquest of Andalusia by the Christians had started.

"It was an invariable custom with the Christians whenever they took a town by force of arms, to ravish the daughters in the presence of their fathers and the women before the eyes of their husbands and families. But on the taking of Barbastro the excesses of this kind committed by them pass all belief" (P.de Gayangos: Muhammadan Dynasties in Spain).

Alfonso VI had become the ruler of Leon, Castile and Portugal by 1072 C.E., Toledo fell in 1085 C.E. Alfonso proclaimed himself emperor of all Spain. Soon he was exacting tribute from all the tiny Muslim states (called 'TAIFA') in central and western part of Spain. On the east of Andalusia the notorious mercenary El Cid started establishing Roman Catholicism. Eventually they joined hands to plunder the Muslim states.

THE MURABITS

The Murabits movement was started in about 1029 C.E. by Abdullah ibn Yasin who converted the Saharan tribes to Islam. To safeguard their borders he built fortresses called Ribats which were manned by volunteers who spent their time in prayers. These were called Al-Morabito (or Al-Moravids). They were what today some would call fundamentalist pious people.

In 1086 C.E. on a call for help from Al-Mutamid, on behalf of the Muslims of Andalusia, Yousaf bin Tashfin, who became Governor of Morocco after Abdullah, sent an army to Algeciras and himself followed soon after. Alfonso VI met him just outside of Badajoz and was squarely defeated. Having helped Al-Mutamid, Yusuf returned without taking any booty. However, Alfonso VI again attacked Al-Mutamid's territory with the help and incitement of the Church and this caused Yusuf bin Tashfin to return in 1089 C.E. to lay siege to Toledo but without success. Many Muslim rulers, considering Yusuf to be an outsider and an eventual threat to themselves, remained aloof while Christians from every corner of Europe had been sending reinforcements to Alfonso VI. Disillusioned by this response from Muslim Sultans, Yusuf returned to North Africa leaving some of his generals behind and organised reinforcement to be sent to them in Spain. Their first action was to consolidate Muslim kingdoms under their banner, banishing their indifferent rulers and strictly enforcing the law of the Quran.

Meanwhile El Cid was active in the east of Andalusia. When the city of Valencia, ruled by a Muslim chieftain Al-Qadir desired to join the Murabits, it was siezed by El Cid. In 1096 C.E. after having secured his position he converted the main Mosque of the city into a Church and forced the Muslims to leave. El Cid died in 1099 C.E., the year when Christian Europe had been roused to hysteria against Muslims and the First Crusade took place. The death of El Cid and lack of reinforcements from Christian Europe, now involved in the Holy Crusades in the Holy Land, allowed Valencia to be conquered by the Murabits. It was not long before whole of Andalusia was once again under the banner of Islam.

Murabits were devoted, pious and good warriors. They treated everyone fairly. But they were not good administrators, just being out of their tribal traditions. In 1118 C.E. Saragossa fell to Alfonso I king of Aragon. In 1121 C.E. Granada came under seige but Alfonso

had to return after a few skirmishes. In all these incursions the local Christians, although living in relative peace and prosperity, always sided with the invading forces some in true religious hatred, some for fear of the Holy Church even when they knew of the corruption and excesses of that Church.

THE MUWAHHIDS

As the power and influence of the Murabits was waning, a new Muslim revivalist movement called the Muwahhids was spreading out of the High Atlas mountains of North Africa. The plight of Muslims of Spain attracted their attention and the waves of the Muwahhids landed in Andalusia and took Algeciras in 1145 C.E. The latter half of the twelfth and early part of the thirteenth century C.E. saw the practice of Islam flourish once again in all its simplicity and depth. There was a great spiritual revival and many scholars wrote illuminating books. In 1195 C.E. Pope Innocent III organized a crusade to dislodge the Muslims from Spain but it was squarely crushed at the battle of Alarcos. The Christians, however, returned in 1212 C.E. and inflicted heavy casualties on the Muslims. This was the real beginning of the decline of the Muslims in Andalusia.

THE DECLINE OF MUSLIMS

North Africa from where the Murabits and the Muwahhids had drawn their strength was a sparsely populated area and the continuous warfare with the Christians took great toll of its population. The Christians were supported by the Holy Catholic Church and through it came the support of Christian princes of Europe. The Muslims at this stage were disunited and many of them forged friendship with the Christian kings in order to defeat their own co-religionists. One result was that while the adversary Muslims kingdoms fell one by one, the Christians disregarding the friendship treaties and promises also overtook those of the allied Muslims as well. Every conquest followed the massacre of Muslims. For example, after the conquest of Ubeda in 1212 C.E. by Alfonso IX 70,000 Muslims were allowed to continue to live in peace on payment of a million 'doblas'. However, on order from the Church all of them were later killed except those who were skilled and considered fit to be slaves. Cordoba fell in 1236 C.E., Valencia in 1238 C.E., and Seville in 1248 C.E. Each conquest was followed by massacre of "heretic followers of Mahomet". By the mid-thirteenth century the Christian army had the control of almost all the Iberian peninsula. Only Granada remained with the Muslims for the next two and a half centuries.

BEGINNING OF THE END

Muslims in Spain were called the Moors and were a cultured lot with very high literacy. With prosperity and long spell of peace, arts and crafts had developed to a high degree. Along with the Jews they formed the backbone of Spanish economy. Jews specialised in financial services and were generally wealthy. It was easier for them to be replaced by Christians and, therefore, they were quickly liquidated. Muslims, however, were specializing in agriculture and crafts and were also more numerous and entrenched and of necessity it took longer to dispose them off.

In contrast with the generally tolerant and benevolent rule of the Muslims, to the Medieval Roman Catholics any tolerance or accommodation of an 'heretic' was regarded as a denial of the Pauline figure of Christ. Paul had specifically told his followers to avoid any dealing with teachers of other faiths (II Tim 2 and Ti 3:9). John had taught that teachers of other doctrines should not be welcomed (II Jn 10). The ignorance of the masses was promoted by the Church by restricting access to Bible itself. In a letter addressed to Fra Fulgentio, Pope

himself warned that "preaching of Scripture is a suspicious thing. He who keeps close to the Scripture will ruin the Catholic faith". In his next letter he was more explicit, warning against too much insistence on the Scriptures "which is a book if anyone keeps close to, he will quite destroy the Catholic Church". With great wealth and power at stake the Church had to maintain its hold through suppression, repression and oppression. Even the clergy were not allowed to study Muslim views and were so ignorant that when the Jesuits found Muslims in the Philippines they called them "Moros".

First there was systematic attempt at subjugating the Muslims and relegating them to the position of serfs. The Moors were hard working and skilled and made good slaves. The popular saying was: "More Moors, more money". The Muslims, as well as Jews, were asked to wear special badges. They were restricted in their movements and not allowed to hold public offices. They could not undertake such professions as could be performed by the Christians. Socialization with Christians was strictly forbidden. The Muslims were to live in special walled areas called 'Moreries' with just one entrance. Once established the Muslims were required to move in within one week or face death. As time went by, no Muslim was allowed to work independently. They were to be slaves or work for a Christian. Restrictions were placed on their public worship. Many succumbed to the pressures and at least nominally became Christians while in fact remaining Muslims and practicing proper worship in secret.

THE SPANISH INQUISITIONS

Europe had already suffered under the Medieval Inquisition under which thousand of 'heretics' had been killed or burnt on stakes. This provided a fit model to exterminate Muslims in Spain. In 1482, King Ferdinand of Aragon established tribunals with command to 'domesticate the heretic slaves' and eventually subdue Muslims who were gathered around Granada. The problem with inquisitors was that they could deal only with 'heretic Christians' and non-Christians could not be punished for not being good Christians. The initial effort, therefore, was towards baptizing Jews and Muslims by whatever means possible. Once baptized they were Christians forever and could be punished for any lapses. Many Muslim 'Conversos' brought up in Muslim customs were victimised because they did not observe Christian customs, which they could not learn as even after 'conversion' they were treated as social pariahs. This made it all the more difficult for the Muslims to be baptized into Christianity. Many were, therefore, forcibly converted. Once so baptised their argument that the conversion was under threat of death was not admissible for it meant that although they had chosen baptism as an alternate to death or exile, the choice had been freely made. This explanation was endorsed by Pope Boniface VIII.

The conversion was hastened by an Edict of Grace. This required that all Muslims and Jews should voluntarily denounce themselves as heretic, repent their past and declare their desire to become Christian. They also had to declare the names of others who were known to them as being heretic. This was to be the only way to avoid punishment and confiscation of property. Anyone who did not denounce himself, but was denounced by others, was arrested and condemned to death. According to the instructions issued at Seville in 1484 C.E. "The children and grand children of those condemned may not hold or possess public offices, or posts, or honours, or be promoted to holy orders or be judges, mayors, constables, magistrates, jurors, stewards, officials of weights and measures, merchants, notaries, public scribes, collectors, tax-farmers, or holders of any other similar office" (H. Kamen: Spanish Inquisition). The pressure on any man with a family to denounce himself was very great. If he did not denounce himself, and was denounced by anyone else, then he would be arrested and tried as an heretic. All his property would be confiscated, and even if he subsequently agreed to accept the official

religion it would not be returned to him. "Neighbors denounced neighbors, friends denounced friends, and members of the same family denounced each other ... The chain reaction set in process by this was highly affective in uprooting heresy" (H. Kamen: op.cit.).

When a prisoner was arrested he was cut-off from the outside world. The trial might last several years and in the mean time his property was confiscated leaving his dependents without any means of livelihood. If he was ever lucky, and it rarely happened, to be freed, he was to take oath of secrecy not to divulge anything he had experienced or seen in the jail. His property could not be returned to him anyway for it was sold piece by piece to pay for his upkeep and cost of the trial.

From the beginning the accused was considered guilty unless he could prove otherwise. The assumption was that the accused would not have been arrested in the first instance if he did not have some basis for being guilty. After all if he had nothing to hide then he would have already denounced himself or others he knew to be heretics. The trial was designed to induce confession of guilt and torture was invariably applied. Men, Women, Children, eight or eighty, none was exempt from torture. The torturers were to be paid from the property of the victim. The confession had to be 'voluntarily' ratified the day after the torture to make it valid. Refusal to ratify their confessions meant further torture until the victim finally ratified the confession or died.

The inquisitors were appointed by the Church and were usually clergy, monks or friars. They were paid out of the victim's property and none of them are ever known to have become anything but rich until there were no more victims centuries later. The inquisitor's task was to determine the victim's guilt through 'voluntary' confession after which they were then handed over to the civil judges to execute judgment on the basis of the confessed guilt. Church did not want to get involved in "spilling of the blood". After all its task was only to save souls through repentance and penance. The princes and civil judges had no choice but to inflict punishment which was most often burning at the stake. Those who died under torture were burnt in effigy. The victim was only paying for his past sins in this world and thus reconciled to God. It was considered a pious act to contribute wood to the pile. Any judge showing lenience faced the threat of excommunication.

Those who had denounced themselves did not go unscathed. They had to do penances and were given punishments to wash their sins. They were also always under threat of being accused of not denouncing some of the heretics that they may have forgotten to mention or even not known. They could be accused of being 'relapsed' or back-sliding if they did something which was even slightly resembling anything that Muslims did, for example, not eating pork, having bath too often especially on a Friday, and changing linens on a Saturday.

THE MUDJARES

The methods employed by the Church were so brutal and effective that within ten years the Muslims who did not flee or fight to death were deprived of their property, and pushed out of the towns and cities on to the land, where they became the serfs of the Christian nobles and land owners and came to be known as Mudjares. They were pious, honest, skilled and hard working. These traits made them desirable and indispensable for the rural Christian nobility. Tucked deep in rural Spain this gave some respite to them for at least secretly practicing their belief. Being out of limelight and with no property worth confiscating, inquisitors were not eager to waste their time on them while there were other, wealthier, victims still available in towns.

THE KINGDOM OF GRANADA

While Muslims were being ruthlessly eliminated in Northern Spain, the kingdom of Granada provided a haven to the fleeing Muslims. In 1238 C.E. Ibn-al-Ahmar of the Banu Nasr was chosen the Khalif of Granada. He consolidated the remaining Muslim territory and repulsed Christian efforts to subjugate them. The famous Alhambra was built during his reign and Muslim culture once again bloomed in Andalusia.

His successors kept up the policies and zeal of Ibn-al-Ahmar inspite of incessant attacks by the Christians. In 1329 C.E Christians gathered an enormous army and moved toward Granada. The Khalif Abu-l-Walid Ismail Ibn Faraj sent emissaries to other Sultans and also to North Africa but no help came. Faced with total annihilation once Granada was besieged, he decided to go out and meet the enemy head on. With his small army of only fifteen hundred horsemen and four thousand on foot he went out of Granada and ambushed the on-coming Christian army killing 50,000 of them and capturing 7000 prisoners, Muslims lost only thirteen, some say ten, horsemen in the entire battle. The Moroccans did arrive in 1340 C.E with an army of 60,000 By now the Christians had also recouped and regrouped and assisted by bad planning and faulty leadership on the part of the Muslims they inflicted heavy losses on the invaders. This further weakened Granada which was once again subjected to repeated attacks by the Christians who were many a times clandestinely helped by some Muslim contenders to power. Muslim empire started decaying until it "became an easy prey to the infidels who surrounded it on every side, like a pack of hungry wolves, God permitting, that the wrong actions of preceding generations should be visited upon the wretched inhabitants of Granada. If we are to believe the historians of that city, numerous were the warnings which the Muslims of Granada received of the approaching chastisement of Heaven, and the ruin of their empire was more than once announced"(P. de Gayangos : Muhammadan Dynasties in Spain). In 1492 C.E Granada surrendered to the Christians under a solemn and binding treaty guaranteeing the Muslims the free and unhindered practice of their religion. The treaty was duly ratified by Ferdinand and Isabella. For some time the Church tried to use enticement and persuasion to convert the Muslims. When it failed, it prevailed on Ferdinand and Isabella to revoke the treaty.

THE COUP DE GRACE

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the whole of Spain was under the control of the Catholics. After three centuries of fighting, persecutions and conversions very few Muslim were left in Spain. Those who maintained a semblance of practice of their faith did so secretly under the threat of being condemned. That they still existed was due to the protection afforded them by rural nobility because of their economic utility. This was, however, against Papal instructions which none could openly defy and eventually they had to agree to gradual elimination of their Muslim serfs.

The Moors were ordered to convert, live as slaves or leave Spain. Exile was, however, out of question and made impossible. Sometimes baptism was performed by herding Muslims in sheep pens and scattering water over their heads. These newly converted were called the Moriscos. Christian midwives were required to attend all births and Moor children were taken away from their parents to be brought up as true Christians since the sincerity of conversion of Moriscos was always doubted. Special groups called Germanias were organised to hunt out any Muslim sympathizers in remote rural and mountainous area. In trying to convert the Muslims the Church was acting for the spiritual advantage of these Muslims themselves. If the Muslims were forced to become Christians, they said, then and only then they would gain salvation in

the next world according to the Pauline doctrine of atonement and redemption enshrined in Catholicism.

The speed with which the Moors were forcibly baptised meant that they could not be instructed in the fundamentals of the new religion. Since the Muslims spoke Arabic, it was difficult to instruct them anyway. This made them all the more vulnerable to inquisitors as not knowing what were Christian fundamentals caused them to be considered as relapsed. Having been baptised meant that they were now subject to the authority of the inquisitors even when the baptism was undertaken forcefully. At one stage Arabic was banned as a language forcing Moriscos to remain silent in the presence of a Christian. By the middle of sixteenth century C.E every soul in the Iberian peninsula was nominally Catholic, and the Inquisition had no further need to discriminate between the baptised and the unbaptised. With the Muslims (and Jews) having been eliminated the number of victims was maintained by widening the net to include the Protestants.

Incredible as it may seem, even after three centuries of persecution there were still many open or secret adherents to Muslim faith so that for a period of twelve years between 1528 C.E. and 1540 C.E an average of one Morisco a week was being burned alive in Valencia alone for refusing to deny what he affirmed: there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad was Messenger of Allah. God be praised.

Having thus eliminated Muslims, efforts were now directed to achieve 'limpieza de sangre', or purity of blood. According to this even converted Muslims or their descendants could not intermarry with old Christians and certificates of purity were required for a marriage (until as late as 1865 C.E), nor hold public offices or any profitable profession for which old Christians were available. To make sure that they did not escape to North Africa, the Moriscos were forbidden to live in the coastal area.

Not satisfied with the working of *limpieza de sangre*, it was decided to deport Moriscos to North Africa and they were given two weeks to reach ports of embarkation. Many were looted and killed on the way. They were often left on lonely shores in North Africa by ship masters and many perished thus. By early seventeenth century virtually all traces of Muslims or any semblance of their culture had been completely wiped out in Spain. The aim of the Catholic Church, which had been to eliminate all who affirmed and worshiped the "Divine Unity" whether Unitarian Christian, Jews or Muslims and who rejected the official religion in Europe was thus virtually realized in the lands where it prevailed.

Elimination of Muslims from Spain (and Portugal) is a dark blot against those who claim to be the followers of the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of human soul. However, the author of 'A History of Christian Missions', a comprehensive work of more than 600 pages by a bishop has only this to say of the whole process spread over almost four hundred years: "The liberation of Spain and Portugal was followed by an expensive period, during which the Christian forces pursued the Muslims into Africa, and set in motion a process which only the twentieth century has been able to reverse". At another place he records: "In the process of reconversion there were some things that were discreditable. It was perhaps inevitable that violence and the pressure exercised by Christian rulers should be more noticeable than the loving preaching of the Gospel". What a sad reflection on the conscience of the Christian mind!

The history did repeat itself in the Philippines where the Jesuit priests from Spain eliminated all traces of Muslim culture from most of the Muslim Philippines. Interestingly, to the Jesuits the local Muslims were also Moros. These Moros are today fighting the battle of their survival in the Islands of Mindanao and other neighbouring islands.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TREE AND ITS FRUIT

It is Jesus himself who is stated to have said: "For good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes"(LK 6:43-44; also see MT 7:16-22,12:33-35). Later on James (who?) also wrote: "Can a fig tree my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine fig? So no fountain both yield salt water and fresh"(Jas 3"12). We shall now examine as to what type of fruit has been brought forth by the hybrid tree which was planted in the Gentile soil by Paul and grafted with pagan ideas by the cunning of Constantine.

New Testament itself is a witness of the dissent and quibbling that prevailed among the early "Christian" communities regarding the religious matters. Paul's tirade against his adversaries are no credit to his "saintly" position in the early church. From its very inception the Pauline Church acted to suppress any semblance of free thought. His opponants, who were none others but the very apostles appointed by Jesus himself, accused him of falsifying Jesus' teachings. He retorted by calling them "sham Christians, interlopers"(Gal 2:4), "dogs"(Phil 3:2), "Pompous ignorames"(I Tim 6:3). He even accused them of "masquerading as apostles of Christ compared to whom Satan himself appeared to be an angel of light"(II Cor 11:14).

Paul advised his followers to avoid "unbelievers"(Rom 16:17, II Cor 6:14, Col 6:14). He cautioned his protege Timothy about his own adversaries to "keep clear of men like these"(II Tim 3:5). To another disciple Titus he advised "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject"(Tit 3:10). John also similarly advised: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed"(II Jn 10). No wonder as soon as the Church received state support, instead of preaching, the church used coercion to "save wretched souls"! The practice has never ceased and the Christian churches have been intolerant (inspite of their outer profession) of other religions and non-Christian, non-European, cultures. Even some of the so-called Protestant reformers did not believe that conscience should be free. Calvin, for example argued that the perfected society of the electorate could not tolerate among it those who challenged its rules. His solution: "a secular prince should see to it that his subjects are not led to strife by rival preachers whence factions and disturbances might arise, but in one place there should be only one kind of preaching". He agreed that Anabaptists and other Protestant extremists should be done to death by the civil authority.

"In the so-called ages of faith when men really did believe the Christian religion in all its completeness, there was the Inquisition with its tortures, there were millions of unfortunate women burnt as witches and there was every kind of cruelty practised upon all sorts of people in the name of religion"(Bertrand Russel: Why I Am Not A Christian). "There was indeed no more grotesque spectacle of human history than the phrase "a religion of love" with the masses of furious controversy which constitute the bulk of Christian theology in all ages of faith"(J.M. Robertson: A History of Free Thought).

THE AGE OF DARKNESS

To keep its hold on the masses the Church opted to monopolise the dissemination of knowledge. "In no instance did the Christian church encourage the pursuit of knowledge, save

only when the same knowledge seemed to support her own pretensions"(Marjorie Bowen: The Church and Social Progress). The Council of Norbonne forbade the possession of any part of the Bible by laymen. The Council of Toulouse also banned the possession of scriptural books by unauthorised persons. The lay people found themselves at the mercy of the clergy. Bible was kept out of the reach of the laity. Often even the clergy did not have access to complete Bibles as they were supplied with selected extracts for use in their sermons. Books of liturgy were supplied in the dead language of Latin which many priests themselves had difficulty in fully apprehending. Vernacular translations were suspect as it was apprehended that in case the laity acquired proper knowledge of the Scriptures many doctrines and articles of faith would fall flat. When John Wycliffe brought out an English translation the church had him condemned for this irreverence. Because of his prominence among the ruling and scholarly classes he was allowed to die in peace on the last day of 1384 C.E. In May 1415 C.E., thirty years after his death, his eaten up and decomposed bones were dug out from his grave under the orders of the Council of Constance. These were burnt and the casket cast into a stream. John Hess (1369?-1415 C.E.), a Bohemian (Czech) priest who was the Rector of the University of Prague stressed the need for reading the Bible. Like other reformers he wrote stinging indictments against the Holy Church. When he refused to recant, the Church condemned and excommunicated him in 1410 C.E. He was then tried at the Council of Constance and condemned as a heretic. He was burnt on stakes in 1415 C.E. Even as late as 1525 C.E. when William Tyndale translated the Bible into English the book was furiously attacked. Bishops and kings denounced it, siezed and burned the copies and hunted down the readers. Tyndale was strangled and his body burnt at the stake in 1536 C.E. Readers of such translations fared no better. Possessors of Wycliffe Bible were hunted down as if they were beasts. Many were burnt with copies around their necks. Men and women were executed for teaching their children the Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer in English. Husbands were made to witness against their wives and children were forced to light the death fires of their parents.

Regarding religious knowledge the position of the Church has been that "the interpretation of the holy scripture should be forbidden not only to the women, considered so very inept, but the men, who merely by virtue of being men consider themselves to be sages. There are many who study in order to become ignorant, especially those of an arrogant, restless and overbearing turn of mind".

Church's opposition to knowledge has not been limited to religion and religious thought. Even men interested in pure science and not in religious controversy, like Roger Bacon and Galileo, were not spared. The organized Church prevented and often penalized the spread of any knowledge which it thought might in any way detract from the various "truths", mundane and spiritual, that it chose to maintain. Thus the belief that the heavenly bodies owed their motion to physical guidance through space by angels was current till Galileo demonstrated the truth of the Copernican theory. The Catholic Church forced Galileo, by exhibiting to him the instruments of torture, to deny the "detestable heresy" that the earth moved round the sun. Even though Copernicus' book had been published in 1543 C.E. and Galileo's in 1632 C.E. the Church did not permit the truth about the solar system to be taught till after the middle of the 18th century C.E. Galileo's books remained on the Index till 1835 C.E. For three centuries the Church held up Copernicus' great discovery which led to a new vision of the Universe and of the place of man's Earth in it. Darwin was violently abused and accused of trying to "dethrone God". He escaped dire consequence only because he lived in England of the nineteenth century. Darwin's theories are still opposed by the organized churches, even though somewhat unobtrusely in certain cases.

The Christian Churches have been the greatest single obstacle to human progress. Thinkers who break new ground in any field are necessarily rare in any age. They are the pioneers of civilization and are entitled to and need the support and encouragement of their contemporaries. As late as 1864 C.E. the Papal Bull laid down that "if any says that the Roman pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself with progress, liberalism and modern civilization, let him be anathema". Freud in the twentieth century has been an anathema to the Church.

Reformation which sought to reform the Church did not fare any better. Calvin sent Servetus to the stakes via his hated opponent, the Church of Rome. Luther himself narrowly escaped persecution when he criticised the Roman Church, yet, ironically enough, when he was in a position of influence later, he developed an intolerant outlook himself. He denounced Copernicus as an upstart astrologer who declared to set his own authority above that of the Holy Scripture.

"Luther saw that he could only save his reformation by sacrificing the peasants ... he asked the princes to 'brandish their swords, to free, save, help and pity the poor people forced to join the peasants...but the wicked, smite, stab, and slay all that you can... These times are so extraordinary that a prince can win heaven more easily by bloodshed than by prayer. You cannot meet a rebel with reason: your best answer is to punch him in the face until he has a bloody nose. Luther always marched closely in step with his secular backers"(Paul Johnson: A History of Christianity). Luther was in fact a close-minded bigot who, in the true tradition of Paul himself, could not stand any opposing beliefs. He declared that the faiths of Jews, Turks and Papists is all one thing. Interestingly, when the town council of Basle forbade the publication of Theodore Bibliander's translation of the (Holy) Quran in 1542, Luther in fact supported the idea of publication as he wished Christendom to know "what an accursed, shameful and desparate book it is"(Stephen Neil: A History of Christian Missions).

Indeed the Church has always opposed social and intellectual progress and has tolerated and often supported and maintained the gravest of social wrongs, and persecuted, with torture, exile and death the thinkers and reformers who sought to alleviate these. As Christianity moved to colonise, the Church supported the temporal rulers in the fair and unfair means of subjugation of the vanquished people and in this the Church saw its own opportunity of saving "wretched souls".

"The subversion of Christ's teachings is the real story In their zeal to attract the masses, Christian teachers gradually modified the message. Jacques Ellul, in *The Subversion of Christianity*, summarises: Christianity imbibes cultures as a sponge...cultures fill with all kinds of things... Christianity is the opposite of what we are shown by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ"(Greg R. Abbrecht: *In Search of Real Christianity*, The Plain Truth, Feb. 1992).

STATUS OF WOMEN

In spite of what is presently advocated in Western(Christian) countries the position of woman in Christianity is unenviably low. She was created after Adam, out of his rib only as a mate to him(Gen 2:18). Is not she who was tempted by Satan and in turn she seduced Adam?[In the Vulgate St. Jerome actually used the word "seducta"]. It is her "seed" that is cursed(Gen 3:15). God told her: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee"(Gen 3:16). "She shall be saved in childbearing"(1 Tim 2). Eve and all other women sin by speech. "They should, therefore, avoid being slanderers"(1 Tim 3:11). Men should, therefore, "refuse profane and old wives fables"(1 Tim 4:7). Of younger widows Paul observed: "Withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies,

speaking things they ought not . . . For some are already turned aside after Satan"(1 Tim 5:13,15).

Paul laid down the rules: "The man is the image and glory of God but the woman is glory of man"(1 Cor 11:7). Women must know their subordinate status for "neither the man was created for the woman; but the woman for man"(1 Cor 11:9). Furthermore are not men "sons of God" whereas women are "daughters of men"?(Gen 6:1).

It is not required of man to cover his head while praying, rather "having his head covered, dishonoureth his head"(1 Cor 11:4). But a woman must cover her head, "for if the woman be not covered, let her be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven let her be covered"(1 Cor 11:6). She is not expected to learn the Scripture, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church"(1 Cor 14:34-35).

Not only in religious matters but also in temporal the church gives a lower, subordinate status to women. When Lady Thecla wanted to follow Paul, in the manner of Mary Magdalene and other women who followed and minister unto Jesus, she was not allowed to do so [rightly or wrongly we need not judge] and she had to put on the male garb in order to do so. When Mary Ward (1586-1646 C.E.) founded the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to establish an order of nuns who could teach girls in the same way the Jesuits taught boys she was severely persecuted and the order was suppressed by the Pope. It was not restored until 1877 C.E.

Let us not blame Paul for having such thoughts. He was saying what he had learnt all his life from his Jewish background. According to Wisdom of Sirach/Ecclesiasticus: "No wickedness comes any where near the wickedness of a woman . . . Bad temper, insolence and shame hold sway where the wife supports the husband . . . do not let water find a leak, do not allow a spiteful woman free rein for her tongue, If she will not do as you tell her, get rid of her"(Ecl 25:19-36). "To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life"(Prov 6:24-26). Woman is the wicked one and for that cause "chastity belts" were made for the women when the men left for the Crusades. Never mind the men themselves.

By upholding the indissolubility of marriage the Christian Church has blighted the lives of many men and women, particularly the latter, by forbidding release from an unhappy marriage tie. A sensitive woman is thus often doomed to a life of misery at the hands of a husband who might be a drunkard and brute. Even now the ban on divorce has not been raised by many of the Christian churches. Those which have indeed permitted divorce have anyway done so against Jesus' (alleged?) clearly stated injunction "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder: whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her"(MK 10:9,11-12; MT 5:32; also quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 7:10-11).

Recently the Catholic Church has selected a (dead) woman for "beatification", a status on the way to sainthood. So honored is Elisabetta Canori Mora who remained in a horrible marriage where her husband abused her inhumanely until he abandoned her and their children. She is being honored for putting up with the worst abuse and indignities that should have been condemned. But she probably had no choice with nowhere to turn to, given that the Catholic Church does not allow divorce, or was it for the sake of children, a situation that hundreds of millions of women around the world of all faiths can identify with, not necessarily for her "commitment" to a marriage that did not deserve to exist. She died in 1825 C. E. It is

only now that the Church has decided to pay attention to her plight. Francis Kissling, a "Catholics for Free Choice" spokesman comments: "For staying in a lousy and destructive marriage, she is on the road to becoming a saint. Now here is a role model for Catholic teenage girls".

DEALING WITH THE PAGANS

For three hundred years after Jesus Christianity remained suspect to the Roman empire. All this changed as Constantine decided to become its Chief Patron. One would think that the "religion of love" sobered by its own experience would have been more compassionate to other religions and cults. But, alas, human nature has a sinister streak in that as soon as it has an upper hand the oppressed become the oppressors. Now that Christian Church had the force of the state at its disposal, it proceeded to stamp out all traces of competition.

Not that the Gentiles and their pagan culture were inferior in any form. There was the whole history of Greek thought and culture behind it. Rather than accepting Christianity, the Gentiles had in fact paganized Christianity itself. Even so, the Church had to assimilate them or get rid of them. Through state decrees towards the end of the fourth century C.E. practice of anything but state sponsored "Christianity" was prohibited with stringent penalties for defaulters. "In almost every province of the Roman world, an army of fanatics, without authority and without discipline invaded the peaceful inhabitants, and the ruins of the fairest structures of antiquity still display the ravages of those barbarians, who alone had time and inclination to execute such laborious destruction" (E. Gibbon: Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire). "Headed by an archbishop, a fanatical mob destroyed the temple of Serapes in Alexandria and then proceeded to pillage the great library with its priceless manuscripts" (Hector Hawton: The Thinker's Handbook). In the year 376 C.E. the shrine of Mithra, located at what is now the Vatican, was destroyed. St. Peter's Cathedral, the seat of the Pope now, occupies the same site. The "Pope" successfully succeeded the Mithraist High Priest to the "sacred chair" which is even now preserved in St. Peter's. From the outset of the fifth Century onwards the only priests or temples in the Roman Empire were Christian priests and temples" (H.G. Wells: A Short History of the World).

The pagan apologist Libanius, writing in 390 C.E. complained bitterly to the Emperor Theodosius about the behaviour of Christian monks: "You did not order the temples to be closed, but men in black, they eat like elephants and keep the servants busy with their drinking, attack the temples with stones, poles and iron crowbars, or even their bare hands and feet. The roofs are knocked in and the walls leveled to the ground, the statues are over-turned and altars demolished. The temple priests must suffer in silence or die. These outrages occur in the towns; it is worse in the country". Anyone not conforming to official religion found himself with certain destruction. In 414 C.E. the renowned pagan philosopher Lady Hypatia was stripped naked, dragged to the church and killed by St. Cynl by his own club. Her flesh was scraped from the bones with oyster shells and the limbs were thrown in the flames (Will Durant: A History of Conflict Between Religion and Science). The Church which had so mercilessly dealt with its own "heretics" could not do any better to its outright opponents. St. Bernard urged the massacre of pagans: "The Christian glorifies in the death of the pagan, because thereby Christ himself is glorified". Being particularly pious the laity did as their spiritual leaders exhorted them to do.

CONVERSION OF EUROPE

In earlier chapters we have studied the spread of Christianity mostly within the Roman Empire and the creation of schism into Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches as well

as the Protestant movement and even the creation of an Eastern (Nestorian) Church outside Europe. This does not necessarily mean that whatever happened within the Roman Empire is anyway creditable to the "religion of peace". As it marched outward its record is not any better, but rather even worse. Of necessity we shall keep the narrative short and mostly in direct quotations.

"In Charlemagne's day the Saxons were the menace; the emperor decided that they must be brought and kept under his control by a mixture of armed force and religion ... Once a German tribe had been conquered, its conversion was included in the terms of peace, as the price to be paid for enjoying the protection of the emperor and the good government that his arms ensured. But this meant an association of the new religion with the conquering powers that could only be dangerous. Any spark of patriotism, any movement of resistance to the dominant race, could only take the form of equally violent opposition to the Christian faith. So every uprising of the people was accompanied by resurgence of paganism, and the long tale of martyrdoms and massacres sheds a lurid light on the process by which the Saxons were finally converted. Violence on the one side led to violence on the other. It is recorded that on one occasion Charlemagne put to death 4,500 Saxons in a single day. The 'Capitulatio de partibus Saxonia' laid down savage penalties for the infringement of a whole variety of Christian rules:

Anyone who kills a bishop, or a deacon, shall be put to death.

Anyone who burns the body of a dead person, as is the pagan fashion, shall be put to death.

Any unbaptized Saxon who attempts to hide himself among his own people and refuse to accept baptism shall be put to death.

Anyone who plots with the pagans against the Christians shall be put to death.

"The initial Christianization is inevitably very superficial; but this is in each case followed by a long period of building, in which the faith becomes part of the inheritance of the people. Political alliances, frequently cemented by marriages, form a large part of the picture, and as in the case of Clovis and of Ethelbert of Kent, the influence of Christian queens seems to have played a notable part in the work of conversion" (Rev. Stephen Neil: *A History of Christian Missions* pp. 79-80, 90).

In the initial stages the church needed support and patronization of the State. This meant a certain degree of subservience to the State although at times the Pope and his surrogates could dictate to many an emperor. This meant that individual princes, wherever they could, sought some sort of independence from the central authority of the Pope at Rome. The creation of the Church of England clearly as a revolt against the Pope is a well known example. In Bohemia, prince "Boreslav wished to have a church organization of his own, with an independent bishop as its head. Independent, that is in the sense that the bishop would be dependent only on the goodwill of his prince" (Stephen Neil: *op. cit.*). Denmark was the first country in which this clash between national and ecclesiastical ideas of organization was resolved, in the main in favour of the crown.

"In Norway, as in Denmark, royal power played a large part in the introduction of the Christian faith. . . Olaf made use of every weapon — flattery, guile, persuasion, and when all else failed, sheer naked coercion. In most cases, when the members of the 'thing' [the Assembly] saw that the king was prepared, if necessary, to thrust his religion down their throats at the point of the sword, they saw reason; a happily democratic solution was arrived at, and all agreed to substitute the new religion for the old (Stephen Neil: *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105). "In Sweden (at the beginning of the eleventh century) the king "arranged for a bishop to be consecrated in Hamburg and located in Skara ... His attempts to make his people Christian met

with obstinate resistance. His intention of destroying the famous temple at Uppsala was frustrated; the temple stood, and its sacrifices were continued until nearly a century after his time — But it is easier to destroy temples than to uproot old and long-established patterns of thought. Long after Sweden was technically Christian, the presence of the old superstitions could constantly be felt not far below the surface' (Stephen Neil: op. cit, pp. 108-109).

Conversion of Russia is an interesting episode. There was a moment at which it seemed possible that Sviatoslav and his whole court might turn Muslim. He had conquered a race of Turks on the Volga who had accepted Islam, and, while staying among them, had been much attracted by their way of life. If Russia had turned Muslim, the whole history of the Western world would have been notably different. Byzantine diplomacy averted this danger, and the Muslim peril never again seriously raised its head. It was under Vladimir (980-1015), the son of Sviatoslav, that Russia became deeply and permanently Christian. Our oldest Russian source, The Chronicle of Nestor, tells us an interesting story of the manner in which Vladimir sent deputations in various directions to investigate the religions professed by his neighbours, in order that he might adopt on behalf of his subjects that which should prove the most sublime. Islam did not attract the messengers. They turned then to the Khazars, the only example of a people which in the Christian era has on a large scale accepted the Jewish faith, and did not find that Judaism was well adapted to the Russians. The ceremonies of the Western Church, as encountered in Germany, appeared to them to be simple, but when they reached Constantinople, they found what they had been seeking" (Stephen Neil: op. cit., pp. 88-89). Islamic insistence on total avoidance of alcohol and simpler way of life seemed to go against the Russian strain and the pomp and pageantry of the Orthodox Church seemed to be well-suited in the background of Russian paganism. Orthodoxy was therefore adopted as the state religion of Russia. For most part the Russian Church remained under the shadow of Constantinople and it was quite some time before things began to change.

"When the Tartars first entered Russia they were not Muslims. When a century later, they accepted Islam, the form in which they accepted it was entirely free from fanaticism or persecuting zeal. Christians and Muslims lived together in amity ... the fall of Constantinople ... Moscow is now the heir and champion of the Byzantine world. From now on the rulers of Moscow begin to refer to their city as 'the third Rome'. The first Rome has fallen into heresy...The second Rome, Constantinople, has fallen under the dominion of the Turk. Moscow alone is left, called into existence by God to be the centre of the world in these later times. Ivan III (1462-1505) married as his second wife the niece of the last emperor of Constantinople ... and regarded himself as the legitimate successor of the Byzantine line. He is the second Constantine, God's representative on earth — when Ivan IV (The terrible) (1533-84) set out in 1552 to reduce the Tartar Khanate of Kazan to subjection, the campaign took on in his eyes the character of a holy war. His first official document after the capture of the city of Kazan related to the foundation of a Christian church; the inhabitants of the city were either baptized or driven out and replaced by Russians. Once the expansive process had begun the geographical extension of the Russian world was astonishingly rapid....it is characteristic of Russian mission, almost without exception, that the connexion between Church and state has been so close that it is almost impossible to separate the work into its constituent elements.... The Muslim Tartars resisted blandishments and threats alike. Only 8,310 were baptized. In 1750 the mullahs protested to the Synod against the high-handed methods of the Metropolitan. the Synod did not accept their complaints as justified; but when, a little later, open revolt broke out among the Tartars, the government found it prudent to remove the over-zealous prelate The history of Russian expansion, ... is strongly mixed ---- statecraft, coercion, bribery, heroic zeal, apostolic simplicity, willingness to suffer and to die" (Stephen

Neil: op. cit., pp. 210-216). The Russian Czars conquered a large number of Khanates taking advantage of their racial, and ethnic differences and mutual rivalries. Large Muslim populations were uprooted, exiled and replaced by Russians. the same policy was later pursued by the Communist rulers exceptionally by Stalin. This attitude continues with the full approval of the Christian West even after the demise of Communism. While Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia were encouraged to seek freedom the same treatment has not been allowed to the Chechens, their only fault being that they profess Islam.

THE CHRISTLESS CROSSES

Within twenty five years of the discovery of the "New World" by Christopher Columbus, swarms of Spanish "Conquistadors" landed on what is now Mexico and Central America. They were basically lured by the fabulous riches and the opportunity it offered for easy colonizing for the benefit of the Spanish Empire. Among the more famous conquistadors was Hernan Cortes who proceeded to conquer the great Aztec empire in what is now known as Mexico. By sheer cunning and deceit he took the emperor Montezuma hostage and tried to govern the native Aztec "Indians" through him. However, after his deputy Pedro de Alvarado impetuously killed a large number of the Aztecs, the Aztecs revolted incurring heavy losses on the Spaniards. The Aztecs were defeated at Otumba and the Aztec empire fell in 1521 C.E. During this period Montezuma was killed. In 1526 C.E. Cortez killed the Aztec emperor Cuauhtemoc.

Marquis Francisco Pizarro proceeded to conquer what is now known as Peru and its neighbouring territories. By professing friendship he siezed Atahualpa, the Inca, who was known to his subjects as the Sun-God and Supreme Ruler. Later Pizarro exacted a stupendous ransom and then treacherously had him executed. He even killed his own partner Diego de Almagro who had actually helped him to conquer Peru.

These and other conquistadors helped to provide a great empire for Spain. And, of course, there was gold. Plenty of gold! To extract this gold the Spanish used the local Indian labour. The greed which knew no bounds forced the Indians to the mines. Any opposition was ruthlessly crushed. "It has been a common Bolivian adage: get all the work out of a donkey and an Indian that you can, then beat him ... multiplied thousands were sacrificed to the god of avarice. There is always another Indian, was the common saying"(Lucile Taylor: Tribes and Nations from the South, A Missionary Study Book). "In 1561 two bishops brought a case against all three orders of friars because they had inflicted and are now inflicting many mistreatments on the Indians ... they insult and strike them, tear out their hair, have them stripped and cruelly flogged, and then throw them into prisons in cages and cruel irons. All Christian organizations, lay or secular, flogged Indians at times"(Paul Johnson: A History of Christianity).

If the conquistadors were determined to conquer and be ruthless with the Indians, the Church was equally zealous to save the native souls. In May 1493, Pope Alexander VI recognized the exclusive right of the Spanish crown to trade with lands that had been or might be discovered to the west of Atlantic, and at the same time laid on the kind injunction "to bring to Christian faith the peoples who inhabit these islands and the mainland". "Thus on threat of death the conquered were forced to accept Christianity which was no more Christian than counterfeit coin is money. A few years ago while excavation was in progress for the foundation of a modern hotel in Cajamarca, a common grave was opened up exposing the skeletons of thousands of Indians. In the tower of one of the cathedrals is the pully wheel used in executing them. The Indians came to realize that they must accept the conqueror's religion and the social

order it brought in, outwardly at least. Thus Rome, with a priest beside every soldier planted the CHRISTLESS CROSS throughout Latin America' (Lucile Taylor, op. cit.).

"The whole conversion process was an extra-ordinary mixture of force, cruelty, stupidity and greed, redeemed by occasional flashes of imagination and charity ... In Mexico there were six main languages and many minor ones, none of which the missionaries spoke at first. One witness, Munez Camargo, says they pointed to the earth, fire, toads and snakes to suggest Hell, raised their eyes to Heaven, then spoke of a single God. More systematic conversion was attempted by siezing children, teaching them at missionary schools, and then using them as interpreters and proselytes... The Aztecs had a number of points of comparison with Christianity — their chief god was son of a virgin, they ate pastry images of him twice a day, they too had baptism and confession, and a compass point cross. Yet there was no attempt to build on these foundations.

"Attempts to educate the Indians met bitter criticism. Jeronimo Lopez wrote in 1541: 'It is a most dangerous error to teach science to the Indians and still more to put Bible and the holy scriptures in their hands ... Many people in our Spain have been lost that way, and have invented a thousand heresies'. "Teaching Latin bred insolence and, worse, exposed the ignorance of European priests. One complaint was that reading the holy scriptures, [The Indians] would learn that the old patriarchs had many wives at the same time, just as they used to have' ... An Indian, Lucas, was refused admission to the Dominicans, despite his virtues and exemplary life, the reason being stated bluntly because he is an Indian" (Paul Johnson: A History of Christianity)

"The missionaries were in fact watching the tragedy of the red man. Neither Britain, France, nor Holland comes well out of this. The inhuman cynicism with which the white man engaged the Indian in his own quarrels, setting Indian against Indian and Indian against European, makes one of the most shameful passages of colonial history. To make things worse, 'drink and the devil had done for the rest'; the Indian could not resist the temptation of the white man's fire-water, and here as elsewhere the supply of alcohol to a primitive people was almost tantamount to deliberate murder" (Stephen Neil: A History of Christian Missions). It is estimated that in the first century after Columbus discovered the Americas five million local "Indians" perished due to wars, famine and disease brought about by the Christian Europe. At the time of arrival of Columbus there were more than a million Indians in Santo Domingo. In less than a century later less than 500 remained. The horror of this can still be seen in the lives and faces of the native American Indians in the North and South American continents.

The Muslim immigration to the Americas started immediately following Columbus' discovery of the New World as it coincided with the fall of Gharnatah (Granada) to Christian forces. Following the repression and the Spanish Inquisition thousands of Moriscos emigrated to America. These include Rodrigue de Lopez, a colleague of Columbus and Spanish General Estevanico de Azemor who conquered Arizona. But the forces of inquisition followed them to the New World and thousands of them were burned on the stake for "apostasy". The second wave of Muslim immigration consisted of the black slaves brought from Africa. Most of these were Muslims who were resistant to being Christianized and often revolted. In 1758 C.E. the leader of these revolts Makendal in Haiti was burnt alive by the French colonial forces.

While what is known as "Latin America" was being colonized by the Spanish and the Portuguese, other European powers also made inroads into the area, mostly on the north-east corner of South America. In the north of Mexico the competition was mainly between the French and the English which later culminated in the establishment of two powerful nations of Canada and the United States of America. Treatment of the native "red" Indians and black

slaves from Africa and their "Christianization" is quite well documented and need not be repeated here.

Indian culture was totally destroyed in the process. Every custom, every social practice was looked down upon. Indian religious practices were forcefully curbed. It is known that many Mayan religious codices existed but these were destroyed without regard even to their historical value. Everything Indian was obliterated and replaced by Christian/Western values.

INDIANS AND DOGS

The Church had the misconception that since the earth was flat anyone venturing farther south than the western bulge of Africa would fall off its edge. Renaissance and contacts with Arab sailors helped to change this attitude. The search for an alternate sea route to India had become necessary because of Muslim occupation of land routes. Columbus had landed in the New World trying to reach India around the globe. Now the search was on for a sea route around Africa which had remained uncharted. The Portuguese navigator Bartolomew Diaz sailed around the southern tip of Africa which he named Cape of Good Hope. He was followed by Vasco de Gama who meeting Arab sailors and with their guidance found the coveted sea route to India. The glamour of the Moghal court and the stories of its fabulous riches attracted the Portuguese, French, Dutch and English ships seeking rights to establish "trading posts". This was the beginning of the usurpation of India and other parts of Asia by these Christian powers. Through intrigues, cunning, deceit and sheer dishonesty the British finally succeeded to eliminate other contending forces and establish what later came to be known as the British Indian Empire over vast areas now comprising of Bharat (India), Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and Myanmar (Burma).

The conquest of India was not easy as various local rulers put up fierce resistance. Subjugation was bloody and ruthless. In 1856 C.E. Delhi was usurped and the vanquished Moghal emperor was presented the heads of his young sons on a silver platter. Streets of Delhi, as also other cities, were splattered with blood and captured soldiers were hanged on hundreds of scaffolds erected outside the city walls.

"The Moguls never forgot their alien origin and their connexion with the Persian culture which they made fashionable in India. But they managed, much more than the British, to make themselves at home; and, though Muslims, they accorded a considerable measure of toleration to their Hindu subjects" (Stephen Neill: A History of Christian Missions). The British plundered India mercilessly. Palaces were robbed. Traitors and abettors were elevated to higher places as Rajas and Nawabs on payment of huge bribes. Religious places, especially of the Muslims, were trampled with heavy boots. For example, the shrine of Muslim saint Shah Chiragh at Lahore was converted into a living quarter for a minor British functionary. The famous Taj Mahal was offered for sale for its marble. The machinery for dismantling of the monument had already arrived when word came from London that it will not be an economical proposition. Everything Indian was sneered at and the British lived separately in their own civil stations and cantonments (military bases). Here they established their clubs and other social places with signs such as "Indians and dogs not allowed". They even had their own churches where for a long time no Indian could dare enter.

On the heels of the "traders" and soldiers came the missionaries. The imposition of colonial rule itself considerably aided the work of the missionaries as the administrators shared the same world view and sprang from the same culture. Thus the colonial administrators were naturally favourably disposed to the work of missionaries which they

often considered as much part of the colonial system as themselves. After all, the missionaries were also providing education and health facilities which were normally required of the government itself. Government funds and other material aid was therefore generously provided to the mission schools and hospitals. Gospel education was a compulsory part of the missionary schools and attendance at church services was encouraged on "voluntary" basis at hospitals. Large land grants benefited these missions and their new converts. The colonial educational system and particularly the missionary schools laid emphasis on the superiority of the western (Christian) culture. Schools were inundated with hostile propaganda which distorted and defamed native beliefs, practices and even history. The products of these schools were pampered with jobs as junior functionaries in the beginning and later to middle tiers of the colonial administration. This produced a class of Indian elite who were more loyal to the "crown" than the king himself.

The British had usurped the government mostly from the Muslim kings. Muslims were therefore more resistant to the colonial rule. They also considered their own monotheist religion to be superior to the polytheist (Three Gods) Christianity. This led to their resisting western education which was more readily adopted by the followers of Hinduism. Muslims therefore remained relatively less developed compared to the Hindus and the Christians. The British exploited the differences between Hindu and Muslim outlooks through their policy of "divide and rule".

The missionary effort in India, however, remained only partially successful and most of the converts came from lower caste "untouchable" classes of Hindu society. Few came from among the Muslims and higher castes of Hindus even though at many places the missions gave tacit approval to the establishment of separate higher caste churches.

"In 1536 the entire caste of the Bharathas (Paravas) the fisher-folk of the Coromandel coast, perhaps 10,000 of them, was baptized. They had been suffering grievously from the depredations of Muslim raiders from the north. Poor, wholly illiterate, and helpless, they turned to the Portuguese for protection; protection was granted, the price to be paid for it being baptism. So all were baptized en masse – and then left for six years without instruction or pastoral care" (Stephen Neill: A History of Christian Missions). In spite of such tactics, by 1643 C.E., the Jesuits calculated that no more than 600 high caste Indians had been baptized in thirty seven years. Nor was this surprising, since apart from a handful of enthusiastic missionaries, the Europeans, either lay or ecclesiastical, would not accord even high class converts equality. The educated Brahmin Matthew de Castro (his Portuguese baptismal name) went to Rome where he was received into the priesthood. But his orders were not acknowledged when he returned to Portuguese colony of Goa. Back in Rome, he was consecrated a bishop in 1637, and given the see of Idalcán which was outside Goa's jurisdiction. He was nonetheless suspended by the archbishop, who actually imprisoned priests whom Bishop de Castro had ordained. He spent the last nineteen years of his life in Rome as adviser on Indian Affairs. By this time there were something like 180 Indian priests in Goa, but there was no prospect of promotion for them in the Church, then or for the next 200 years, since most European priests would not serve under Indian bishops, of whatever caste" (Paul Johnson: A History of Christianity).

When the British finally left they left a legacy of hatred between various national groups. Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India clearly conspired with the boundary demarcation arbiter Redcliff so as to leave behind the seed of discord and especially biased against the Muslim areas. Muslim people of Kashmir are still fighting to gain freedom from Indian subjugation, a legacy of Mountbatten-Redcliff-Nehru conspiracy.

DE-ISLAMISATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

The islands of Philippines were ruled by a number of small rulers until these were conquered by Spanish conquistadors mostly operating from the New World. King Philip II, after whose names the new territory was named as *las Filipinas*, ordered the expeditionary forces to "conquer the lands, convert the people". The state of Manilad (today's Manila) and other Muslim states were subjugated and the people forced to Christianity. "Augustinian, Franciscan, Jesuit and Dominican [missionary orders] played a role as vital as that of the soldiers.... One of the most difficult problems the Spanish faced was the subjugation of the warlike Moros. The Orders took more and more of a guiding hand in the Philippines and acquired great amount of property. It was opposition to the power of clergy that in large measure brought about the rising sentiment for independence" (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2nd ed., 1950, pp. 1535).

The "Moros" were so named by the Spanish because they too, like the Moriscos of Spain, were Muslims. Soon the Spanish inquisitors arrived to sort out these "Moros" who proved a difficult nut to crack and even as of today have refused to lose their identity, culture and religion.

Spain occupied the Philippine islands for 350 years in one of the most corrupt and brutal manner. At the end of the 19th Century as a result of the Spanish American War the islands were ceded by Spain to the United States. The Filipinos cooperated with the hope of gaining freedom. Their new masters had, however, their own plans. They had indeed paid a sum of \$20 million to Spain for the right of continued ownership and, specifically, had their eyes on the "illimited markets of China that lay beyond the Philippines". Mark Twain, the famous American writer, called it "entrance fee into the society of Sceptered Thieves". He wrote: "We do not intend to free but to subjugate the people of Philippines. As I am an anti-Imperialist, I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land". A large number of important Americans such as former president Grover Cleveland, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, president of American Federation of Labour, and Moorfield Storey, a later head of NAACP, opposed the imperialistic ambition and formed the Anti-Imperialist League. But others like Senator Albert Beveridge considered the occupation as "the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world". Filipinos were portrayed as savages with feathers in their hair, as dark faced grass-skirted Sambos.

The "Filipino Insurrection" was forcefully and brutally quelled and is marked by racism and military atrocities. Many of the troops had the background of the American Indian battles. Many from the South had brought with them the prejudices and racial bigotry of the post-Civil War South. Here was their chance to let loose their anger and frustrations of their past. A soldier writing home in early 1899 C.E. declared: "Our fighting blood was up and we all went to kill the 'niggers'.... This shooting human beings is a "hot game and beats the rabbit hunting to all pieces". Yet another wrote "the boys go for the enemy as if they were chasing jack rabbits I, for one, hope that Uncle Sam will apply the chastening rod, good, hard, and plenty, and lay it on until they come into the reservations and promise to be good injuns". Captain Eliot of the Kansas Regiment sent a dispatch: "Caloocan was supposed to contain 17,000 inhabitants. The 20th Kansas swept through it and now Caloocan contains not a living native. Of the buildings, the battered walls of the great church and dismal prison alone remain".

Mark Twain wrote: "We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them, destroyed their fields, burned their villages, and turned their widows and orphans out of doors". In March 1906 he denounced the massacre of more than 900 Muslim Filipinos who were

trapped in the volcanic basin of Mount Dajo and fired upon by the American troops for days until all were killed—men, women and children. Gen. Leonard Wood, who commanded this massacre was later made the Governor General of the new acquisition.

The islands of the Philippines were occupied by U.S.A. according to President McKinley "to Christianize and civilize" and so the Muslim population remained persecuted as before. In 1915 C.E. the Bangsa Moro part in the south was opened to Christian immigration from the north. Catholic church has always abetted the brutal de-Islamisation and even various governments have been tending tacit support to criminal looting and killing in the Muslim areas. In more recent time, especially after independence following the World War-II, when the Moros revolted against taking over of their lands, the Philippine army has been carrying on a brutal campaign of subjugation of these people.

USURPATION AND EXPLOITATION OF THE FAR EAST

Christian efforts for conversion of local people in other parts of Asia have not been as successful as in the Philippines. This may have been partly due to the fact that, like India, these other countries were more organized and partly because the colonial powers found it more politic not to unduly offend the religious sensitivities of their subjects to avoid building up of excessive resistance. Various European powers who occupied Indonesia (Dutch East Indies), Indo-China and other countries of the Far East brutalised and exploited these lands degrading their cultures and imposing their own cultures and plundered their resources for their own national benefit to the detriment of the enslaved nations.

In China, the colonial exploiters forced the Chinese to grant trading concessions and encouraged trade in opium. "Drug wars" were waged when the Chinese objected to such exploitation. Hong Kong, Macao, Shanghai and other trading towns became centres of intrigue in China. The Chinese tried to resist such incursions and started the I HO CH'UAN (the Righteous Harmony Fists) movement which came to be known as the Boxer Movement. Everywhere the words 'Mieh Yang' (destroy the foreigners) were to be heard. The Movement had the backing of the Dowager Empress. However, the combined forces of foreign powers forced their will on the Chinese.

There were also other peculiar problems in translating Christian concepts in Chinese language. For example, for translating the word "God" the missionary Ricci "generally used the expression T'ien Chu, Lord of Heaven. In one of his Catechisms he had written that those who adore Heaven instead of the Lord of Heaven pay homage to the Imperial Palace and venerate its beauty instead of homage to the Emperor. But he had convinced himself that the ancient Chinese terms Shang-Ti and T'ien (simply 'Heaven') have a theistic significance and can rightly be used in a wide sense of anything venerable so that there was nothing improper in Christian using it of Confucius... Ricci after prolonged stay, took the moderate position, deciding that the rites in honour of Confucius and family had only a civil significance and that Christians could engage in them in so far as the laws of the Empire required. He would trust the Chinese Christians to decide eventually what they could and could not do" (Stephen Neil: A History of Christian Missions). In spite of such compromises Christianity remained an alien religion to the Chinese people.

Interestingly, the Chinese discovered that the Christian assumption that the world originated in the year 4004 B.C.E. (as calculated by Archbishop Usher of Armagh in his *Annals Veteris et Novi Testamente* and widely accepted especially in the Protestant circles) was belied by Chinese chronology. This meant that a wholesale revision of the Old Testament was required. It was further argued that if the Chinese were right on this point, might they not

be right on others? Could not the concept of "the risen Christ" and the "second coming of Christ" be treated as a limited form of the Chinese "ancestor worship"?

To overcome Chinese objections to adoption of Christian doctrines the missionaries resorted to enticing the young mind. "Thousands of young Chinese were asking themselves the questions: How can China be regenerated? Where can the spiritual force be found to put new life into the vast body of the old empire. To many it seemed that there was only one answer: The West had good ideas, but the Christian Gospel alone would make it possible for these ideas to take effect in China. Thus it came about that in these years scores of Christian schools could record that every single student who had finished the course had been baptized before leaving school"(Stephen Neil: op. cit). The spread of Christianity, however, remained limited.

As for Japan, the moment of the arrival of the missionaries was on the whole propitious. Japan was passing through a period of grave political disorder. There was no central authority and the land was divided up among 250 daimyos (local rulers), each of whom claimed full authority in his own dominion. The country was open to the foreigners. The Japanese were eager for trade, and were especially interested in guns which, once acquired, they set to work to copy in their own arsenals, with the remarkable Japanese ingenuity "Buddhism was in discredit and there was no strongly established form of national religion to resist the preaching of the Gospel, and there was a genuine openness to new ideas....until 1593 the evangelization of Japan was entirely in the hands of the Jesuits. The position of the Jesuits, weakened by the arrival of the Franciscans and Dominicans from Manila, and by the manifest lack of unity among the missionaries; still more by the arrival of the red-heads; the Dutch and the British, who lost no opportunity of carrying out in Japan the feuds which divided their nations in Europe"(Stephen Neil: op.cit). Various shades of missionaries, and their hohobbing with the opposing factions, convinced the Japanese that "they were there as forerunners of an army of conquest, and that Christian infiltration would be followed by political occupation"(Stephen Neil: op. cit.) The shrewd Japanese foresaw the outcome in view of what had already happened in the Philippines and elsewhere. In the meantime by about 1590 C.E. the first of the new centralizing rulers, Hideyoshi, had managed to subject the whole of Japan to his control. He was followed by his son Hiyaabri and later by Leyasu(1542-1616 C.E.) and Leyatsu. Having perceived the Christians as a potential threat the problem was solved by persecution and death or apostasy of almost all Christians. After the defeat of Japan in the World War II one of the terms of surrender required the Emperor to relinquish his claim of divinity as "Son of the Sun-god". One of the first acts of General McArthur on arrival in Japan was to requisition the services of ten thousand missionaries to help Christianize the occupied lands. No spectacular results have been achieved.

In South Korea considerable missionary work was carried out after the Korean War. It was first disguised in the form of relief operations. Although a large number of persons did convert to some sort of Christianity, it has not taken a firm root in the Korean society.

Thus the people of Asia with their own glorious traditions and ancient wisdom rejected (the European) Christianity except where it was imposed on them by brute force.

SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

After the discovery of the southern sea route to India the European ships mostly skirted the African continent since it seemed to contain very little for the purposes of material exploitation beyond the slave trade. By the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century the Europeans had established commercial interests mostly along the coastal areas and had also been able to exercise considerable indirect influence in different parts of Africa. But soon

this began to change as French proceeded to annex North African (Maghreb) states for colonization. This started what came to be known as "scramble for Africa" by Britain, Germany, Spain, Portugal and even Belgium, later to be joined by Italy. The immediate purpose, of course, was to exploit the human and material resources of the great unexploited continent. As an Englishman Holman Bentley put it crudely "So, with the opening of Africa Manchester may take heart that not only that there are thousands more to wear its cloth, but thousands more to be buried in it". Of course, the missionary was to accompany the soldier and the merchant. Addressing meeting of the Anglican Church Missionary Society in 1840 C.E. attended among others by Prince Albert, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Shaftesbury, the French Ambassador, the leader of the Irish nationalists Daniel O Connor as well as David Livingstone, Arch-deacon Wilberforce declared: "every ship laden with commerce might also bear the boon of everlasting life, that from no part of the earth should they receive only, without giving for the gold of the west and the spices from the east, the more precious wealth the more blessed frankincense of Christ their master".

In order to forestall wars between competing colonial nations which seemed to be pointless in view of the vast area that was available for acquisition and exploitation, the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 C.E. laid down the "rules to be observed in future with regard to the occupation of territory on the coast of Africa". It was a formula for an indiscriminate land grabbing in the "dark continent". Arbitrary lines were drawn across the (un-mapped) map of Africa and allocated or claimed by different colonial powers. These lines cut through old territories and tribal lands and linguistic and ethnic boundaries without any regard to human factors.

The paper partition of Africa was followed by military conquest. By cunning manipulation, conceit, intrigue, deception, and sheer brute force the European powers proceeded to occupy the allocated lands. Military imperialism was spectacularly bloody. The African response was also resolute and often prolonged. The imperial powers had between themselves agreed by the Brussels Convention not to sell arms to the Africans. Primitive axes, knives, spears, arrows and at best outmoded flintlock Dane guns were no match for the Maxim gun, the Gatling gun and other modern weapons. The dice was already loaded against the African. By 1902 C.E. the conquest of Africa was all but concluded. The horror of all this has been part of the living nightmare of Africa and still haunts the modern independent African states.

In southern Africa the descendants of the original Dutch settlers who called themselves Afrikaners "differed from other Africans mainly in their individualism and in the seventeenth-century Calvinist beliefs and outlook which re-inforced the conviction, born of the circumstances in which they found themselves, that they were an elect of God and the heathen coloured folk had no natural right against them or to the land they were taking for their own. In this spirit the early Boers ... hunted down the primitive Bushmen and overran or dispersed the Hottentot tribes until by 1779 they had encountered the vast mass of the strongly organised Bantu tribes... the result was the first of a series of 'Kaffir Wars' which were to prove a sore trial to the authorities at Cape Town for the next hundred years" (R. Oliver and J.D. Fage: A Short History of Africa, pp.163). In due course South Africa would emerge as a Union, then a Dominion and eventually a white-ruled 'republic' committed to the ideal of 'apartheid'. Having exploited and abused the native "black" Africans for over a century the shameless White Supremist(Christian) rule succumbed to the world pressure and yielded to the demand of the rule of the majority.

KAFFIRS AND COOLIES

Colonization of Africa meant that its vast and rich material and human resources must be exploited for the benefit of the White (Christian) Western countries. Large tracts of best cultivable land was grabbed from African (black or northern Arab) population. In Northern Africa French "colons" were assigned the best available land and the Muslim population pushed to desert or hilly land away for the coast. "It was clearly impracticable to push all the Algerian tribes into the Sahara. It became necessary for the mountains and steppes to be systematically occupied by military posts and swept by flying columns... of the 350,000 Europeans who were living in Algeria by 1880, nearly half were not French at all, but Spaniards, Italians, and Maltese ... the more successful the settlers were in creating farms and dams, in building roads and railways, schools and hospitals, the more they were bound to incur envy and suspicion of the native population, shut away in the poor lands".

"Here there were many hundreds of thousands of Africans who in one way or another lost the lands they had previously cultivated. Many were forced to move to new and perhaps inferior land in 'native reserves'. Many others were left in possession of the lands they were cultivating at the time of the occupation, but lost the surrounding uncultivated land which in a sense was their 'fallow'. Accordingly, when they moved, in the course of shifting cultivation, they found themselves rent-paying 'squatters' on alienated land.

"An indirect effect which was somewhat more widespread, was the wage labour demand by settlers, and above all by plantation and mining companies in all these territories. During the early part of colonial period, such demands were almost invariably satisfied by political pressure of one kind or another. Here, however, one must remember that in all colonial territories a very large part of the demands made by the governments upon their subjects were demands for labour — labour for the construction and maintenance of roads and railways, labour for the building and clearing of government stations, and (above all in the early days) labour for portage. Nominally such labour might be given in commutation of tax. In practice, however, it was compulsory labour, imposed not upon all alike, but upon those who were detailed by their chiefs to give it in response to the demands of government officers. Africans of this period did not perceive the difference, so clear to European minds, between compulsory labour for public and private purposes; they were merely aware that one of the most immediate and unpleasant consequences of European rule was that the able-bodied might be listed for arduous labour of a kind previously considered suitable only for women and slaves" (R. Oliver and J.D. Fage: *A Short History of Africa*, pp. 149-150, 200, 202).

With the expansion of mining and plantations and also for the development of railways and rudiments of industry need rose for a more reliable and skilled labour. The 'Kaffir', as the black African was derogatorially called, could not fulfill these requirements. In British controlled territories, now known as the British Empire where sun never set, 'pressing needs of measures for securing an adequate supply of reliable, as well as efficient labour' led to the import of 'indentured labour' mostly from British India. By 'reliable' and 'efficient' the British farmers meant someone who would work from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, bound by contract for years at a stretch. This was not slavery, which by then had been abolished, but perhaps worse than slavery since the slave being one's property had to be looked after and protected but the indentured (bonded) labour being no one's responsibility had no protection from any quarter. They were derogatorially called 'Coolie', the scum of the earth. They worked under extreme harsh conditions after having been lured from distant India on false pretenses of a bright future in a land of milk, honey and gold. What was in store, however, was a life of deprivation and untold misery.

"They worked from sunrise to sunset, men and women alike. My great-grandfather wasn't given time off even to construct a house for the family. They lived under terrible conditions—they were even flogged at times... For one week there was wind and rain. Mothers, even after giving birth, had to work on the fields. The children were rested on a calico sheeting under a tree while the women worked nearby. The sirdars or overseer would not allow them to respond to babies' cries for milk. But if caught feeding during working hours, women were maltreated" (Arjumand Bano: *The Age of the Asian Coolies*).

ENLIGHTENMENT OF DARK AFRICA

On the eve of the imposition of the colonial rule three religions had become established in Africa. Islam had been wide-spread in the north, north-east and along the eastern coast. Rest of Africa had its own local "religions" mostly at tribal or regional basis. Christianity had by then been introduced but was confined to the coastal peripheries in the region south of Sahara with the exception of South Africa and a few areas of West Africa where it had penetrated some miles inland.

Imposition of colonial rule also meant proselytising by Christian missionaries who had a direct access to the colonial administrators and helped mould their attitudes toward the "native" population. The missionaries with their own (Christian) view of the world induced the colonial administrators to suppress the traditional rites and customs as being "un-Christian". "In the issue of gain or loss, there is no doubt that the presence or absence of European missionaries as precursors of the colonial regime was one of the most important factors. At the start of the colonial period missionaries were frequently more numerous, and in many ways more influential, than the representative of the colonial government....No colonial government of this period had the resources to enter upon education. Missionaries on the other hand, were finding that all over pagan Africa the school was by far the most effective means of Christian evangelism" (Roland Oliver and J.D. Fage: *A Short History of Africa*, pp. 203-204).

The missionary tended sooner or later to provoke violence, leading to armed European intervention a constitutional crisis, and outright confrontation. The pattern was not necessarily deliberate but it was remarkably similar in various parts of the African coast. The missionaries might seek to dissociate themselves from European colonization, but in fact most of them, in Africa at least, found it far more convenient (and safe) to operate with whites in control. The missionary stationed in the Old Town, the Reverend Samuel Egerly, made no secret of his anxiety to change the habits of those he termed as degraded and heathen people. The missionaries, seconded by European traders, persuaded the Consul that he would be forwarding the work of civilization if he got HMS Antelope to bombard Old Town and this was done. Reverend C.A. Gollmar commenting on this said: "I look upon it as God's intervention for the good of Africa". Two years later Gollmar instigated another attack, this time on the Ijebu tribe. Vessels like HMS Scourge were repeatedly used on the coast and river to frighten chiefs into complying with missionary demands to operate freely. Local by-laws soon reflected the needs of Christian evangelism. The missionaries also established school and hospitals. In many cases the school was the church itself.

In Sudan a line was drawn south of which Muslim travellers were not allowed. The area was reserved only for Christian missionary activity. After independence trouble has been fomented between Muslim North and pagan/Christian South. Christian missionaries have openly interfered in the internal affairs of Sudan.

Of the three religions the traditional (BANTU) religion came under heaviest attack. The entire European intervention during the colonial period was based on the assumption that

to bring about development African culture had to be modified if not destroyed altogether. To the missionary anything opposed to the Christian usage was heathen and therefore unacceptable. Now that they had the authority of the government behind them everything lawful or unlawful was permissible in stamping out such evil. They induced the colonial administrators to abolish some of the native practices and to suppress certain cults and deities. By attacking religious tenets and practices of the native African (BANTU) religion the Christian missionaries also weakened the influence of African traditional and spiritual leaders such as priests, priestesses, magicians, rain-makers and divine monarchs. Becoming a Christian meant, to a large extent, ceasing to be an African and using European culture as point of reference. Thus Christianity had a disintegrating effect on African culture.

The African, however, did not necessarily accept Christianity lock, stock and barrel. A large variety of "Christian" Churches sprang up specifically to accommodate those who had been not able to comply with the missionary church's insistence on monogamy and had been expelled, as well as those who could not join the Church because they were already polygamous. Some African Christians used certain aspects of Christianity to strengthen aspects of traditional beliefs that needed strengthening and at the same time used traditional beliefs to strengthen aspects of Christianity where they were found wanting. Thus traditional religion formed the foundation upon which many of the new "indigenous churches" were based. Faced with the possibility of the (black) African going over to Islam, the missionaries found it expedient not to oppose these indigenous or independent churches and in fact in many cases encouraged these as being half way towards Christianity and preferable to Muslim conversion. The variety of native African churches is indicated by some of their names: the Catholic Church of South Africa King George Win the War, the African Casteroil Church, Apostolic Fountain Catholic Church, Church of Pleasant Living Congregation, the Fire Baptized Holiness Church of God, the Great George V National Church, the Sunlight Four Corners Apostolic for Witness of God Church. Many of these churches teach that there is a reverse colour bar in heaven. Many have believed of a black Christ in heaven. Bibles depicting black Jesus and other patriarchs and prophets have been produced to entice the black population (This in U.S.A. too!). Many are now questioning the present form of Church services. If pianos and organs of the western musical traditions can be used in the Churches then why not African drums, they ask.

The attitude of colonial administration towards Islam was mixed. Some regarded Islamic institutions as socially advanced and able to be exploited in the interest of colonial administration. Submissive Muslim leaders were encouraged and awarded official favours. Muslims who did not toe the colonial line were "disciplined" and harassed. Others saw it as a threat to its "Christianizing and Civilizing" mission. In Belgian Congo, for example, there was a total ban on Muslim schools and only a very few mosques were allowed to be built. The French tried to oppose effectively the spread of Islam and Islamic jurisprudence and even promoted the traditional religion and codified customary law as a counter force in Western Sudan. They also tried to impose French culture on Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

While the followers of the native African religion(s) being localised, less formal, and relatively unorganised, became an easy prey to the missionary onslaught, the followers of Islam being relatively more organized and entrenched in their religious practice posed a bullwark against the spread of Christianity. The local Muslim population being rather poor and without any financial support from the government was able to provide only traditional education to its children. Anyone seeking "modern" education had to seek admission in mission schools or in government-run schools wherever they existed later. In both these types of schools everything native (especially Islamic) was looked down upon and all "modern" things equated

with European (Christian) way of life and thought. Thus those who preferred not to send their children to these "modern" schools found themselves at disadvantage as they could not serve in the colonial set up even as junior functionaries. Since the colonial system equated elitism with modern (Western) education those studying in modern schools received a greater share of colonial favours and recognition. Muslims generally ended up least schooled and poor and even in countries having large majority of Muslim population their influence became marginal. The Muslim children who did join the modern schools were inundated with anti-Islamic propaganda. Many succumbed to this hostile environment and if not converted to Christianity, they were completely alienated from their ancestral society.

The followers of traditional religion(s) having become easier prey of Christian preselytization found education within easier reach. All this resulted in a "Christian" (Europeanized) elite which filled the lower tiers of colonial Africa. Even after independence a number of Muslim majority states found themselves ruled over by a non-Muslim (Christian) leadership that had been originally trained by the colonial rulers as a product of Christian schools and carried anti-Muslim prejudices. In whole of post-independence Africa the only main effort at breakaway has been by Christianized Biafra in Muslim majority country of Nigeria through active support of western Christian countries and organizations. Having failed in the first attempt separation is being actively encouraged by sowing the seeds of discord and encouragement by Western(Christian) governments.

It is however noteworthy that Islam itself posed a formidable barrier to the spread of Christianity where it was available as a choice to the native (black) African. The missionaries had to seek the support of colonial administrators to suppress Islam and even resorted to hostile and false propaganda to achieve their end. Some such examples are recounted below followed by some interesting rebuttals:

1. Applications were sent by the clergy of the Church of England to the Governor of Sierra Leon, Col. Richard Doherty, praying that the mounting wave of Islam should be checked:

"To His Excellency the Governor and the Honourable the Board of Council, the Petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:-

"That the Agent of H.M.S. in this Colony has marked with no ordinary concern the rapid increase of the Mohammadans and the bold practice of their imposing ceremonies.

"That Mohammadan teachers are going about proselytising in the villages in consequence of which many of the Liberated Africans have been induced to join their numbers and some have even sent their children from the village to town to have them trained up in this mixed system of heathenism, superstition and Mohammadan delusion.

"That the Liberated African apprenticed to such persons are of course deprived of all Christian instruction and are frequently made to work on the Lord's Day for which the Mohammadans in their houses and in their town of Fourah Bay especially manifest not the slightest regard.

"Your petitioners therefore beg leave to express to Your Excellency and your Honourable Board of Council their firm conviction that the free and open exercise of Mohammadanism is fraught with danger to the Colony both in a moral and civil point of view and humbly request that you will be pleased to consider the propriety of checking so injurious a system and to adopt such measures as will secure to the Liberated Africans bound to Mohammadans, the privileges of the Lord's Day and other means available for their instruction in the Christian religion. And your Petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray."

SIGNED:

G.A. Kipling
M.S. Stedmer
Isaac Smith
J.U. Graf

T. Payton
James Beal
W.M. Young

II. The Free Churchmen of Sierra Leone also wrote to the Governor as follows.

Sierra Leone,
18th June 1939.

Sir,

We the undersigned preachers and members of the various chapels established in the Colony since its formation having been requested by Your Excellency to give our opinion as to the pernicious effects of the Mohammedan religion now extensively introduced into this Colony by the building of large prayer houses for that purpose, being allowed to carry on prayers in the same, we beg to draw Your Excellency's attention to the following remarks which will fully at once show that such places are only intended for entrapping the ignorant into the grossest superstition imaginable viz-

Imprimis:- By the Mohammedan Law, a man may have one wife and as many concubines as he may be able to maintain which we consider to be an evil propagated that it is quite contrary and inconsistent to the law of God and the common usage and custom of this Colony.

Secondly:- They believe in witchcraft in contention and charms and they are hereby subjected to gross impositions by making a trade in selling charms and "lass mammy" to effect certain changes on the minds of weak and credulous persons which is done by writing upon a table (commonly in use with them) certain pernicious ink which is obtained from the bark of a tree scraps of Scriptural notes and texts taken from the Al-Koran and then washed off and put into a bottle with this whenever they feel desirous of obtaining some particular wishes they make their suit upon any individual.

Thirdly:- At the death of a person the relations according to the circumstances make sacrifices for various purposes either by the killing of bulls, sheep and fowls, etc., which we consider is contrary to precepts planned down in the New Testament. And against the common law and usages first established in this Colony on its formation.

Fourthly:- The Mohammedan tolerates and allows the slave trade being carried on by the laws laid down in the Al-Koran by the bringing and selling of slaves. Consequently Free-Town Sierra Leone should not be made an emporium for such class and description of people becoming as a place of permanent residence.

Fifthly:- They dedicate the fifth day of the week as their day of public worship whereas the seventh day is set apart by all Protestants as their Sabbath which is universally allowed as the established doctrine and rules of every sincere Christian and are considered as a part and parcel of the Ancient laws of Great Britain and of the Colony from the time immemorial and although the Mohammedans make this little difference yet they should be made to observe the Christian Sabbath with the greatest veneration and respect by observing the same as have been heretofore done by former Governors on the first formation of the said Colony; and further in addition they would not consent for one moment to allow any of the surrounding tribes and others to become permanent inhabitants of this Colony. Because their manners and customs were quite contrary and repugnant to the established doctrine founded in the same.

In drawing these conclusions for Your Excellency's information and consideration we sincerely trust and hope that Your Excellency will be pleased to give a favourable opinion of our views on this subject by discountenancing the Mohammedan pernicious doctrine being established therein and which had hitherto gained so much repute among the lower orders by leading astray the benighted sons of Africa who have been lately rescued from the misery of second slavery and now plunged into human darkness by this grossest of all evils the Mohammedan Persuasion.

We be to subscribe ourselves etc.

SIGNED:

Joseph Jewett, p.ch
William Williams (his x mark)
Jas Jackson (his x mark)
David Wilson

A. Elliot
Jas. W. Richards
Jacob Snowball
Scipio Wright.

John Leigh
John Jany
A.O. Conner

(NOTE. The "x" mark indicates that the concerned person was illiterate and could not even sign his own name.)

III. The following excerpts from Sierra Leon studies No. 21 pp 14-15 are further illuminating:

"Matters were proceeding peaceably amongst them until the advent of a certain foreign Christian Missionary who in order to combat the progress of the rival religion succeeded in inducing the Government to force the recaptives into the profession of Christianity by promulgating a form of indenture whereby the Liberated Africans were apprenticed to the Christians for a number of years during which period they were forced among other things to conform only to the Christian form of worship. This was in 1830.

But in spite of all the pressure and indignities they had to suffer many of the recaptives upon the completion of their apprenticeship associated themselves with the Muslims so that the missionaries sought further means of repression and began to malign the Muslims to the Government Authorities and so dreadful a picture was portrayed of the character of the harmless band that government was actually instigated into demolishing the Mosque at Foulah Town in or about the year 1839."

On such accusations the actual report of the Commission of Inquiry, Sierra Leon Government, stated that: "The Mohammedan religion also had participated in the supersession of slave trade"... "About six years before, the Sheriff of Mecca had sent a letter to the King of Fulas for circulation through all these 'Mandingo' tribes strictly prohibiting the selling of slaves and which latter was also promulgated among the Yorubas, Fulanis and other neighbouring tribes. The

slave traffic was declared to be contrary to the teachings of Muhammad which pronounce the most fearful denunciations of Allah's wrath in the world hereafter against those who persist in the traffic with the European nations" (Sierra Leone Studies, No. 21, pp. 18-19).

IV. The following quotation from the writings of a Christian writer is also interesting:

"The progress of Islam in Nigeria has no doubt been materially advanced by this absence of any feeling of repulsion toward the Negro. Indeed Islam seems never to have treated the Negro as an inferior as has been unhappily so often the case in Christendom: ... Thus the converted Negro at once takes an equal place in the brotherhood of believers neither his colour nor his race nor any associations of the past standing in the way" (Sir Thomas Arnold: The Preachings of Islam, pp. 359).

V. Muslim attitude toward different races has been aptly portrayed in the passages below:

"More than most religions, Islam preaches the brotherhood of all races, colours and nations within its fold. Muhammad himself probably had exactly the same skin-colouring as Jesus a very sun-tanned white — but today his followers embrace all colours: black men from Africa, yellow men from China, brown men from Malaya, white men from Turkey" (James A. Michener: Islam, The Misunderstood Religion, Reader's Digest, American Edition, May 1955).

No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and endeavour, so many and so various races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small community in Japan, show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition" (N.A.R. Gibb: Whither Islam, London, 1932).

VI. On the other hand the typical Christian practice as opposed to that of Islam is reflected in the following incident:

"Take away that black man! I can have no discussion with him!" exclaimed the Christian Archbishop Cyrus, when the Arab conquerors had sent a deputation of their ablest men to discuss terms of surrender of the capital of Egypt, headed by Negro Ubaidah as the ablest of them all. To the sacred Archbishop's astonishment he was told that this man was commissioned by General Amr, that the Moslems held negroes and white men in equal respect, judging a man by his character and not by his colour. "Well, if the negro must lead, he must speak gently", ordered the prelate, "so as not to frighten his white audience".

"There are a thousand blacks, as black as myself, amongst our companions, I and they would be ready to meet and fight a hundred enemies together. We live only to fight for God and to follow his will. We care naught for wealth, so long as we have the where-withal to stay our hunger and to clothe our bodies. The world is naught for us, the next world is all."

"Such a spirit of class distinction is certainly the greatest hindrance to missionary work in the East, as every impartial observer has noted. How, for instance, can any other appeal stand against that of the Moslem who, in approaching the pagan, says to him, however obscure or degraded he may be, 'Embrace the faith, and you are all at once an equal and a brother'. Islam knows no colour line" (S.S. Leeder: Veiled Mysteries of Egypt, London, 1912).

A SHIP CALLED 'JESUS'

The record of Christianity itself regarding slavery also speaks for itself. In the recorded history of the human race there is no equal to the exploitation of man by man as practiced by the Christian followers of the Prince of Peace.

"On the other side of the reckoning there is however the fact that the advent of the Portuguese was a calamity for Africa. It was Prince Henry's men who first brought back slaves from Africa to Europe. In the first instance from Morocco and later from West Coast. The first negroes brought to Europe were presented to the Pope who set his seal of approval on the traffic in human beings as a means of "saving souls". Thus the foundations were laid of the trade that brought untold sufferings to millions of men and women deprived them of their birthright, depopulated West Africa and perpetrated a crime against humanity only equalled in our time by the mass murder of Jews by the Germans and by the concentration camps and forced labour of present-day Soviet Russia" (Lady Southern: Gambia).

"But Portugal did not stand alone. Most of the trading forts had slave rooms, where captives, some times up to 1000 in number, could be detained until they were shipped overseas. The English came into the trade in 1562 when Captain (afterwards Sir John) Hawkins took three cargoes of slaves to the West Indies. Queen Elizabeth demurred at first but afterwards she lent Hawkins a ship of her own called the "Jesus", and granted him as coat-of-arms a Negro

Gay activists protest bishop's enthronement

LONDON: Gay activists on Saturday disrupted the ceremonial enthronement of a senior bishop who apologised for his court conviction 26 years ago for gross indecency with another man. Protesters shouting "Sack the bishop" surged forward as Anglican Bishop Michael Turnbull was about to knock three times on the north door of 900-years-old Durham Cathedral for admission, the traditional start to the ceremony.

The leader of the gay rights group outrage, Peter Tattle, was bundled to the ground by police and arrested along with another man. One of the demonstrators, Glenn Halton, said: "Michael Turnbull has stated that in his view homosexuality is incompatible with full-time stipendary ministry. We feel it is extremely hypocritical in view of his previous conviction."

Turnbull apologised during the ceremony to the 1,500-strong congregation, saying people had "a right to be shocked about what happened". The incident has revealed "the depth of God's forgiveness for us all", he said.

Turnbull succeeds David Jenkins in what is the fourth most senior post in the Church of England. Jenkins courted controversy with his maverick views. He said he did not believe in permanent hell, the physical resurrection of Christ or central aspects of the Christmas story. Turnbull has refused to step down since disclosure of his conviction last month touched off a public outcry. Even his own parish priest, Rev. John Marshall, believes Turnbull should resign. In a television interview to be broadcast on Sunday, Marshall says the overwhelming majority of his congregation felt let down by the new bishop.

"The younger clergy might be able to accept what has happened, but it is very disturbing for priests of my generation, and for our wives," he said in excerpts from the program trailed in Saturday's newspapers. - Reuter

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL
OCTOBER 23, 1994, ISLAMABAD

An Apology for Racism *Southern Baptists Regret 'Acts of Evil'*

ATLANTA— The overwhelmingly white Southern Baptist Convention, born of the split between North and South over slavery, apologized to blacks yesterday for condoning racism for much of its history.

The vote in favor of the resolution received a standing ovation from 20,000 members of the nation's largest Protestant denomination during their annual convention.

The resolution denounces racism, repudiates "historic acts of evil such as slavery" and asks for forgiveness. It commits the 15.6 million-member church to eradicating vestiges of racism and notes that the denomination failed to support the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s.

Gary L. Frost, the only black in the faith's leadership, accepted the apology on behalf of black Southern Baptists.

"We pray that the genuineness of your repentance will be reflected in your attitude and your actions," said Frost, a pastor from Youngstown, Ohio. He and the denomination's president, James B. Henry, embraced at the podium after the vote.

Supporters of the resolution hope it will open the door wider to evangelizing among blacks and other ethnic groups.

The Southern Baptist Convention was created in 1845 in a split with the American Baptist Convention over the question of whether slave owners could be missionaries. The resolution acknowledges that "many of our Southern Baptist forebears defended the 'right' to own slaves" and that in "later years the Southern Baptists failed, in many cases opposed, legitimate initiatives to secure the civil rights of African-American."

In 1989, the denomination first declared racism a sin.

The apology resolution, which was approved overwhelmingly after only a few minutes' debate, states:

"We apologize to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systematic racism in our life-time...

"We ask for forgiveness from our African-American brothers and sisters, acknowledging that our own healing is at stake ...

"We hereby commit ourselves to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry."

"It is a fitting, admirable resolution, and I would hope that it would not merely be a resolution that is on paper," said the Rev. Clifford Jones, president of the General Baptist Convention in North Carolina, a predominantly black Baptist denomination.

1,800 of the 39,910 churches in the Southern Baptist convention are primarily black, said spokesman Herb Hollinger. He said there is no official count of black members.

Gary L. Carter, Associated Press,
THE WASHINGTON POST
June 21, 1995.

laden with chains". (Georgina A. Goodlock: *Sons of Africa*, London Student Christian Movement, London, 1928).

"Compared with an estimate of some 900,000 Negro slaves landed in the Americas by 1600, the seventeenth-century figure is thought to be at least 2,750,000; the figure for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot have been less than 7,000,000 and 4,000,000 respectively. The new development was pioneered by the Dutch, who by 1642 had permanently ousted the Portuguese from the Gold Coast. For a short time the transatlantic trade was almost a Dutch monopoly, but their success provoked English and French hostility, and by the eighteenth century it was the traders of these two nations who were the principal competitors in the international trade, though the Portuguese continued with a private slave trade of their own, from Angola and San Thome to Brazil. In terms of trade alone, victory went to Britain. By the end of the eighteenth century, her ships were carrying more than half the slaves carried to America. This was in part a reflection of the growing maritime and commercial ascendancy of Britain in Europe, but it was also due to the fact that British activities became concentrated from the Gold Coast eastwards, on the shores of the most thickly populated and economically most developed region of Guinea ... The loss of manpower from Guinea alone amounted to over 100,000 fit youngmen and women a year".

These figures are "for slaves landed in America, and allowance must be made for the mortality on the voyage across Atlantic, which could be high, and must on the average have been at least 15-20 per cent. A further allowance could be made for the loss of life caused by slaving operations in Africa, but this is quite impossible to evaluate" (Roland Oliver & J.D. Fage: *A Short History of Africa*, pp. 120-121). An estimated 25 to 30 million Negroes and local Indians were killed as a result of the colonial operations during the sixteen, seventeen and eighteenth centuries.

Treatment of slaves at its best was perhaps in the United States of America. However, even there the physical and psychological abuse of the "nigger" by the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (W.A.S.P.) Christian slave-owners should be enough for any honest God-fearing Christian heart to feel ashamed. The ordeals are graphically chronicled especially in the well-known classics *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Roots*. To top it all the atrocities of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other similar white racist groups with their burning crosses are too horrible to recount and a discredit to any civilization.

The sexual abuse of the black female was widely prevalent until even recent times. They were on "open season" for white male predators. Most aristocratic gentlemen kept negro females for their own pleasure and for entertaining their aristocratic friends. "Such distinguished gentlemen as Benjamin Franklin and (President) Thomas Jefferson purchased Negro wenches and used them sexually for their pleasure" (Harry Benjamin & R.E.L. Masters: *Prostitution and Morality*). Thomas Jefferson's daughters from such a negro slave female were actually sold into a brothel. "Thomas Jefferson — made a clause in his last will conferring freedom on his own slave offsprings, as far as the Slave Code of Virginia permitted him to do it, by humbly imploring the Legislature of Virginia to confirm the bequest with permission to remain in the state, where their families and connections were. Two of his daughters by an Octoroon female slave were taken from Virginia to New Orleans after Jefferson's death and sold in the slave market at \$ 1500 each to be used for unmentionable purposes. Both these unfortunate children of the author of the Declaration of Independence were quite white, their eyes blue and their hair long, soft and auburn in colour. Both were highly educated and accomplished. The youngest daughter escaped from her master and committed suicide by

drowning herself to escape the horror of her position" (J.A. Rogers: Sex and Race, Vol 2, Futuro Press, New York, 1957).

"One of President Tyler's ("half-bred") daughters ran away with the man she loved in order that they might be married but for this they must reach foreign soil. A young lady of the White House could not marry the man of her choice in the United States. The lovers were captured and she was brought back to His Excellency, her father, who sold her to a slave-trader. From that slave-pen she was taken to New Orleans by a man who expected to get \$ 2500 for her on account of her beauty" (Jane Grey Swissheld: Half a Century).

"The intercourse with Negro females resulted in a very high incidence of incest, since slave owners enjoyed the favours of the progressively light skinned offspring they had spawned. There is a record of one octogenarian gentleman who copulated with five generations of directly descending females, impregnating his daughter, grand-daughter, great-grand-daughter, great-great-grand-daughter successively. His eye was admittedly upon his great-great-grand daughter, then coming up" (Benjamin & Masters: op. cit).

Slavery in the Christian world, in fact, was not only tolerated but rather advocated on religious grounds. The South Carolina Baptist Association produced a Biblical defence of slavery in 1822 C.E. In 1844 C.E. John England, Bishop of Charleston, provided a similar one for the southern white Catholics. There were standard Biblical texts on negro inferiority, patriarchal and Mosaic acceptance of servitude, and, of course, St. Paul's teachings on obedience to masters (Col 3:22, Tit 2:9). In spite of great efforts by liberals motivated by humanitarian principles, large negro population even in these "modern" times remains underprivileged in U.S.A. Although separated (segregated) churches for (emancipated) black slaves and their descendants have been mostly dealt with, few blacks really venture into white dominated churches especially in the South.

It is only in 1995 that Southern Baptist Convention acknowledged its injustices and excesses against the blacks. Segregation and feeling of superiority of white race dominates all walks of life in Christian lands. "Three out of five Black and Hispanic Americans live in communities where there are uncontrolled toxic waste sites, according to 'Toxic Waste and Race', a report issued by the United Church of Christ. The common denominator in the location of toxic wastes, the study concludes, is race (Signs of the Times, December 1992, pp:6: Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, ID, U.S.A.)

American colonial attitude toward their own (white) kind was itself not complimentary to the ideals of the "Pilgrim Fathers" who had fled Europe in order to pursue freedom of religious freedom. Quakers professing non-violence were harassed and hunted down. Several were burnt. When they moved westward to Pennsylvania they found no respite from persecution for their divergent (none-the-less Christian) views. The same fate was meted out to the Mormons whose founder Joseph Smith was martyred while moving his sect westward. They were also forced to change their sectarian laws on polygamy which their Elders had to do "under divine guidance". The colonies also had their own quota of witch-burning. The town of Salem in the North East state of Massachusetts is synonymous with such outrages. Daughters of American Revolution, women descendants of those who fought during the rebellion against the British Colonial rule, seek white supremacy and disregard of the rights of what they consider to be not their own kind. White supremacist feeling is still strong in a large section of American population.

THE RIGHT OF MIGHT

"Several centuries after the political decline of the Islamic world, the world has been dominated by the West. The West not only succeeded in dominating almost the entire world, it also influenced the thinking of those it controlled and imposed its values and philosophy on them. The West also became powerful militarily and economically. It controlled various branches of knowledge including information technology and used it to suppress anyone who challenged the West or its ideology, and to block the dissemination and spread of values it did not approve of.

"The West speaks eloquently of the rule of law, human rights, democracy or the voice of the majority, without taking into account certain man-made laws that are unfair, human rights that are not right, or majority opinion that may not be correct. International laws, on the other hand, were designed to provide the mighty with the right to suppress the weak. The West would not hesitate to turn its back on the very principles of justice it professes to uphold if it is to its advantage. In West Asia, the Western powers seemed to be protecting the Kuwaitis from the Iraqis and their action was based on 'humanitarian grounds'. Though it was evident that the Serbs were killing the Bosnian Muslims, the East created a thousand and one excuses for not acting against the Serbs.

"The actual principle subscribed to by the West is based on the dictum 'Might is Right'. Since the West is powerful, everything it does is fair. Since the Serbs are strong, their annexation of Muslim land is condoned. As Muslims everywhere are weak, everything they do is wrong and unfair. Efforts by Muslims to re-assert the Islamic concept of justice are criticised by the West as an attempt to revive antiquated thinking. The danger is that Muslims, in their frustration may act rashly. This would then confirm the allegations that Muslims are extremists..... The present disorder in the world is the result of the disregard for the principles of justice. The international community is cruel to those who are weak. Again, the Bosnian example: the weak Bosnian Muslims are not allowed to obtain arms even for self-defence, while the Serbs are being rewarded with weaponry and territory. (Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohammad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Impact International, 13 August - 9 September, 1993, London).

HABAKKUK'S VISION

- Hbk 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting O Lord mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, thou has ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou has established them for correction.
- 13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?
- 17 Shall they therefore empty their nets, and not spare continually to slay the nations?
- 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time but at the end it shall speak, and not be: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.
- 4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by faith.
- 5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

- 8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and all that dwell there.

THE FRUIT

In all the chaos created by Christianity one is likely to forget that one of the Ten Commandments stated that "Thou shalt not kill (Ex 20:13). Yet Christians in all times have violated this Commandment with impunity. In whatever lands Christianity has been spread, it has been through the wielding of the sword or at the point of the gun. The havoc of the colonial wars of occupation, the letting of blood between the Christian nations themselves in the two World Wars and lately the localised proxy wars, bring no credit to this so-called "religion of love". During World War II millions died in Europe and elsewhere. In two nights of "carpet bombing" 60,000 men and women, young and old, died in the city of Dresden (Germany) alone. All this to hasten the end of the war which was already imminent. The horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, at a time when the Japanese army was already thinking of surrendering, cannot be justified on any moral and ethical ground. Christian powers in the post World War II era have continued direct or proxy wars shattering the peace of various regions of the world. The message of the heavenly host "on earth peace, goodwill toward men"(L.K 2:14) remains foreign to the Christian mind.

It is sometimes argued that it is not only the Christians but followers of other religions as well who have perpetrated atrocities on people of religions other than their own and even upon their own co-religionists. This itself does not absolve Christianity of its own atrocities. What has been the peculiarity of the Christian atrocities is that many of these have been perpetrated in the name of religion to save "wretched souls".[Christians themselves have probably killed more Christians in the 20th Century C.E. than all the Christians killed by peoples of all other religions in the last twenty centuries]. Priests have always been by the side of the soldiers and where the missionaries had established schools and hospitals the aim in most cases was not basically humanitarian but more often a trap and a bait for alluring people to Christianity. The missionaries have been as much a part of the imperialist system as the colonial administrator. The missionaries cooperated with these administrators in the exploitation of the "natives" or at best did not openly oppose the brutal exploitation. They have indeed spearheaded the efforts to destroy "native" cultures. "Far too often the Christian churches presented themselves as the extension of European social and intellectual concept rather than embodiment of universal truths. And equally important the churches as institutions and their clergy as individuals and as a collectivity appeared merely as one facet of European rule"(Paul Johnson : A History of Christianity).

Lest it be misunderstood, there have been a large number of Christians at all times who, like those among the followers of other religions and even aticists, have contributed to the welfare of their fellow human beings because of the goodness of their heart. The organized efforts by Christian missionary groups as tools of exploitation have, however, been counter-productive inasmuch as these have acted to undermine the local cultures of the "natives". In the economic fields the material benefits too have been minimal, or rather exploitative, as is witnessed by the conditions of various regions colonized by the Christian West. If there has emerged humanism and liberalism in the western society it has been through the reaction to the authority of the Church. The motives have been moral and ethical rather than religious or shall we say "inspire of the Church"?

On the political plane the Christian churches have conspicuously lacked the courage of their conviction. They have witnessed the exploitation of humanity as equal partners of secular powers or where they could not be a party to it then mostly as silent spectators. In the events leading to the Second World War the churches on the both sides of the divide remained nationalistic rather than humanistic in their outlook and behaviour. This has been true for both the Catholic as well as the Protestant churches. After the June 1934 mass-purge of his opponents Hitler received a telegram of warmest thanks for the first rescue operation, from the Evangelical Bishop of Nassau-Hessen, followed by a circular letter claiming that the blood bath demonstrated to the world the unique greatness of the Fuhrer; he has been sent to us by God. Catholic Bishops welcomed the news as a strong stress on authority in the German state. Leaders of the German Evangelical Church unanimously affirmed their unconditional loyalty to the Third Reich and its leaders. Nazi flags hung from the church walls and the congregations gave the Nazi salute. With the exception of minor voices which were easily suppressed German churches greeted Nazi victories by ringing their bells, until these had to be taken away to be melted down for war effort. Occasionally a few bishops condemned "killings" but did not mention words like "Jews" or "non-Aryans". The official Vatican reaction to the treatment of Jews in concentration camps and the confiscation of their property was only that it was too harsh. Pope Pius XII refused to condemn the absorption of Czechoslovakia as one of the "historic processes in which from the political point of view the Church is not interested". Elsewhere in the "Allied" countries opposition to Nazi actions came late and that too because of national political reasons. For the most part Christianity remained complacent to the "final solution" of the Jewish problem. In our own present times the Pope has been less concerned with the rape victims of Bosnia than with the problem of abortion of the babies conceived through these incidents.

On the social plane as well Christianity has not done well. The doctrine that God became man to save humanity by His own sacrifice and that whosoever believed in such a saving grace of the "Saviour" would straight away go to heaven provided that he bowed before the cross and said that he believed in Christ, led to the logical corollary that a man could do what he pleased and still go to heaven." Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ"(Rom 5:1). According to the Protestant reformer John Calvin "We assert that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined, both whom He would admit to salvation and whom He would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on His gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit; but that to those whom He devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment". It looks like a lottery as to who will be saved and who will go to hell. "The conviction is spreading that one's sins can be made whiter than snow by an act of easy exercise of self-deceit, is to encourage him to be a rascal. If there is no punishment for sin there can be no forgiveness for it. If Christ paid our score, and if there is no hell and therefore no chance of our getting into trouble by forgetting the obligation, then we can be as wicked as we like with impunity inside the secular law, even from self-reproach, which becomes mere ingratitude to the Savior"(George Bernard Shaw: *Androcles And The Lion*: pp. 98-99). Since the salvation is provided through the Grace of God and not through good works, confession and not repentance has been the Christian code of conduct. "All have sinned"(Rom 3:23) has been the misguiding light of the Christian civilization. "Father I have sinned, forgive me!" has been a pet sentence with evangelists like Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson and Jimmy Swaggart. And if the eternal fate of individual human beings has already been pre-determined as if by lottery then "a God that would use his power to create human beings whom he foreknew and predestinated should be eternally tormented could be neither

wise, just, nor loving. His standard would be lower than that of many men"(Charles Taze Russell, founder of Jehovah's Witnesses).

Adultery is no more a cardinal sin inspite of the Ten commandments (Ex 20:4) even among the clergy pre-marital sex has become a popular past-time. In U.S.A. it is estimated that births out of wedlock account for almost 30% of all births. As many as 70% of young students passing out of high school have experienced casual sex at least once. Society no longer looks down on it. Gays and lesbians are no more anathema to Christendom. Tight dress and loose morals is the order of the day. Many ordained priests are openly and unashamedly admitting to be involved in practices held immoral by the standards professed even by Christianity itself.

Ever since Paul suggested to Timothy to "use a little wine"(1 Tim 5:23), Abbeys and monasteries have been priding themselves in producing high class wines to the delight and pleasure of priests and princes, saints and sinners alike. Fiery spirits, not the Holy Spirit, have helped to keep high the spirit of the faithful. After all, Jesus' very first miracle is said to be the provision of plenty of wine for his friends (according to John, Ch. 2) at Cana. And, did he not implore his followers to drink wine in remembrance of him? Ever since then alcohol has flowed freely in the Christian blood. No other religious group comes anywhere near to the alcoholism of the Christian world.

Paul expected the approaching of the end of the world and was little concerned with reforming the social order. Slaves were not to revolt against their masters, and freemen were to obey their governments even when these were unjust. Everything would be set to right in the next stage. So he advised the slaves to give their entire obedience to their earthly masters "out of reverence for the Lord"(Col 3:22). The Christian Church countenanced slavery and when free thinkers started their uphill struggle for its abolition on humanitarian grounds, the church and the slave holders opposed them. Christians have nurtured the superiority of the white race in all the lands they occupied. If in the Spanish-speaking areas this feeling is somewhat subdued then it is due to their legacy of the influence of Islam.

To Paul it was shocking that a woman should even address the congregation(1 Cor 14:35). Yet many churches now have women ordained as priestesses leading the congregations. If such injunctions have not passed the test of practicality then this underlines the failibility of the Christian religion and its tenets.

After the disastrous experiment in socialism, whereby new converts to "Judeo-Christianity" would sell their belongings and bring the proceeds to the Apostles(Acts 4: 32-37: 5:1-12), the Mother Church at Jerusalem was left destitute. Ever since the church has always ensured its temporal prosperity. Monasteries and cathedrals amassed great wealth. Holy orders like the Franciscans, which had vowed the life of poverty, were soon acquiring wealth during the Inquisition as many friars and monks turned into inquisitors. Protestantism gave filip to capitalism and the reaction to this church/capitalist axis gave birth to communism. Both these economic systems based on materialistic considerations have been the bane of humanity.

According to the French writer P. Valadier: "It was the Christian tradition that produced atheism as its fruits; it led to the murder of God in the conscience of men because it presented them with an unbelievable God". The tree of Christianity has indeed borne strange fruits.

THE VOICE OF PROPHECY

The fruits of the tree of Christianity planted by Paul are certainly not the covetable sweet harvest of love but rather the sour grapes of wrath. A tree is indeed known by its fruit.

"Some would fall back in self-defence, on the old distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. The visible Church may be poor and wretched, and naked and blind; the invisible Church is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. For Christians this is a useful, indeed almost a necessary distinction. It is of no interest whatever to non-Christians. For them the Gospel cannot be separated from its integument. It presents itself to them in terms of that which they can see and hear and experience in relation to the visible Church .. Other Christians feel that the empirical Church is involved in so grave a betrayal of true Christian faith that the only way to live Christianity is to go out from the Church again. But when we are face to face with the non-Christian and start anew, the attempt to make such a break avail us nothing. We cannot deny our past — we are what the history of centuries has made us. Whatever we try to make of ourselves, the Gospel will always take the shape of that vessel in which it is carried"(Stephen Neill: Christian Faith And Other Faiths).

Today more and more people are seeing the truth behind the facade of Christianity which is loosing a large number of its followers who are becoming simply non-practicing converting to other religions or becoming atheists or agnostics. For once Paul seems to be right about his own followers: "lovers of their own selves, covetous, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God: Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"(II Tim 3:2-5). They have traded "pursuit of happiness" by taking up the "pursuit of pleasure".

A recent study by the European Values Group has confirmed that Europeans are moving rapidly away from religious belief as practical guide to life... the results show the waning influence of traditional Christian values on everyday decisions:

- Few believe the church is providing answers to social problems (25%) and the problems of family life (31%).
- Only 13% of Britons attend church once a week while nearly 50% never attend.
- Only 44% of people in Britain retain fundamental Christian beliefs in life after death and only 32% accept the resurrection.
- However, people do still feel there must be a God (71%) and see the need of a religious service to mark the significances of birth (65%) marriage (79%) and death(84%).
- Inspite of this only 54% claim to be religious — a dichotomy which shows increasing dissatisfaction with traditional religion in fulfilling a spiritual role in society.

(Ruth Arnold: The Plain Truth magazine, Feb. 1992).

However, in the April 1993 issue of the same magazine it is quoted that only about one third of the British people believe in a "spiritual power" ("believers" include non-Christians). This is said to be a drop from 36% in the early 1980. Similar erosion of religious faith has been reported from other countries as well:

- 55% Americans believe there is too little religious influence in the nation. However, that belief itself is not accompanied by a desire for religious values to dictate American life-style.
- Only about 56% of the American respondents surveyed by the annual Barna report strongly agreed with the statement that the Bible is "the written word of God".
- In the same Report only 64% are stated to have disagreed that the Ten Commandments are out of date.

(Source: The Plain Truth, February 1993)

- Only 60% Americans believe that religion can answer modern problems.
 - Although 81% of Quebec (Canada) students believed in God and 80% believed in the divinity of Jesus, only 24% see themselves as committed to organized religion and only 18% attended weekly church.
 - Only 56% Germans believe in God.
- (Source: The Plain Truth, July 1993).

- There are more than 850,000 missing/runaway/abducted children in U.S.A. This number does not include abused/mistreated children still living in broken homes or some type of correction facility, etc.

A 1991 survey of high school students in Florida (U.S.A) revealed that:

- 61% had engaged in sexual intercourse [Recent national data shows as many as 72% of male students having had some active sexual experience].
- 53% had drunk alcohol during the previous 30 days
- 24% had carried weapons during the previous 30 days

(Source: The Plain Truth, August 1993)

- By the turn of the century AIDS and AIDS-related ailments will leave more than 80,000 American children without mothers.
- In Christian societies gambling is not only tolerated it is even encouraged. Churches frequently hold BINGO games. States sponsor lotteries in many countries.
- Australians spent an average of U.S. \$ 215.33 per adult in 1989-90 on gambling.
- Canadians spent U.S. \$ 8.8 billion on legal wagers and bets in 1991.
- Almost 70% of Britons gamble, spending nearly U.S. \$ 21 billion a year.
- Gamblers in U.S.A. spent more than U.S.\$ 304 billion in 1991.
- Venezuelans annually spend almost US\$ 200 million on lotteries and horse racing.

These statistics do not include illegal gambling (Source: The Plain Truth, January 1993).

- One fifth of the world's (developed Christian) population uses four fifths of global resources. That same fifth of the population creates a comparable percentage of the world's waste (Source: The Plain Truth, April 1993).
- In the wake of the civil war and famine tearing apart Somalia, European (Christian) countries were taking advantage of political anarchy in the country to dump toxic waste (Source: The Plain Truth, May/June 1993).
- During January-November 1992 major U.S. newspaper articles mentioned Somalia 2300 times while Madonna was cited 4300 times (Source: U.S. News & World Report, December 28, 1992 - January 4, 1993).
- According to a survey at the University of Westminster although the top executives in the U.K. have a high degree of ethical awareness, most expressed a willingness to abandon their principles for the sake of profit [Honesty is not really a good policy]. (Source: The Plain Truth, September 1993)
- "You really don't find much difference between the church and unchurched in terms of cheating, tax evasion, and pilferage, largely because there is a social religion ... many are just putting a religion together that is comfortable for them and titillates them and is not necessarily challenging. Somebody called it religion a la carte. That's the central weakness of Christianity in this country [U.S.A.] today: There is not a sturdiness of belief" (George Gallup, Jr., American pollster).

It can be argued that social/moral disorder is taking place because people are moving away from "Christian Values". "We, who live in the age of popes bent under the weight of diamonds and wrought of gold, of evangelists as wealthy as gangsters, and the Christians richer than Nero at his greediest, can legitimately ask if Christianity exists in any form even resembling that of Paul, much less of Jesus"(Guy Davenport: 2 Timothy, in Incarnation, ed. Alfred Corn)

This too had been prophesied by Jesus the holy prophet of God: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (MT 15:13). This is what John the Baptist had also declared: "The axe is laid unto the roots of the tree. Every tree therefore which bringeth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire"(MT 3:10, LK 3:9).

If "only a remnant shall be saved"(Rom 9:27; Isa 10:22) then what avail was Jesus' miraculous birth, missionary life, suffering death on the Cross, resurrection and ascension? If his first coming was a fiasco [as per Pauline deception] then what avail will his second coming be? There must be a better alternate to Pauline Christianity to bring peace on earth, goodwill to all men (and women as well).

APPENDIX I

DOUBTFUL AUTHORS

SOME OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORS: According to NAB

PENTATEUCHS: or the Five Books of Moses (TORAH). The grandeur of this historic sweep is the result of a careful and complex joining of several historical traditions or sources it is not always possible to distinguish with certainty among the various sources.

GENESIS: Despite its unity of plan and purpose, the book is a complex work, not to be attributed to a single original author.

DEUTERONOMY: Written after the Israelites had for centuries been resident in the Land of Promise.

JOSHUA: Like the books which precede it, the book of Joshua was built up by a long and complex process of editing traditional materials.

RUTH: There is no certainty about the author of the book. [It is possibly a book of fiction].

SAMUEL (I & II): The final editor is unknown, nor are we certain of the time at which the various strands of the narrative were put together.

KINGS (I & II): Without minimizing the complexity of the process by which this material was transmitted for many centuries

JOB: The author of the book is not known.

PSALMS: About half the psalms are attributed in these "titles" to David. The Davidic authorship of some of these is taken for granted in the New Testament ... About a third of the psalms have no author's name prefixed to them.

PROVERBS: To Solomon are explicitly ascribed parts II and V of the book: he is the patron of Hebrew wisdom. Of Agur (Part VI) and Lemuel (Part VIII), nothing further is known. Parts III and IV are attributed to "the wise". The remaining parts are anonymous.

ECCLESIASTES: The author of the book was a popular teacher of popular wisdom. Qoheleth was obviously only his literary name. Because he is called "David's son, king in Jerusalem", it was commonly thought that he was King Solomon. Such personation, however, was but a literary device to lend greater dignity and authority to the book of a circumstance which does not in any way impugn its inspired character.

[Author's COMMENT: It is surprising that an "inspired author" would seek "dignity and authority" by impersonation. Yet the faith of the Jews and Christians is based on such books].

WISDOM: Author not known

SIRACH: not included in the Hebrew Bible in the first century.

ISAIAH: The complete Book of Isaiah is an anthology of poems composed chiefly by the great prophet, but also by disciples, some of whom came many years after Isaiah ... Chapter 40-55 ... are generally attributed to an anonymous poet ... Chapters 56-66 contain oracles from a later period...

DANIEL: This book takes its name, not from the author, who is actually unknown, but from its hero strictly speaking, the book does not belong to the prophetic writings but rather to a distinctive type of literature known as "apocalyptic".

[Author's COMMENT: Yet on the basis of such books of unknown authorship coming of the Messiah and second coming of Christ are claimed to have been prophesied].

JONAH: Written ... probably in the fifth century B.C.E. ..Jonah stands for a narrow and vindictive mentality.

MALACHI: This work was composed by an anonymous writer. [Malachi —"my messenger"— was a pseudonym used by the ancient unknown writer].

DID MOSES WRITE THE PENTATEUCH?

Deuteronomy Chapter 34 gives the account of the death and burial of Moses who himself is supposed to be the author of the book !

Deut(3:14): Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob into the coast of Geshuri and Maachathi and called them after his own name Bashan haweth-Jair.

COMMENT: This happened long after Moses' death. This too is a later compilation.

Gen(13:18): Mentions Hebron, It was so named during Joshua's days (Josh 14:14) and, therefore, could not have been said or written by Moses.

Gen(36:31): These are the dukes that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

COMMENT: This was clearly written long after Moses, Joshua or even the period covered by the book of Judges.

Gen(13:7): The Canaanites and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

COMMENT: This shows its origin at the time when these people were no more living in that land, which is clearly long after Moses!.

Gen(14:14): And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

Judg(18:27-29): And they took the things which Micah had made and the priest which had, and came unto Laish and they called the name of the city Dan..... howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.

COMMENT: This happened about 80 years after the death of Moses. So Moses could not be the author of Genesis!

Gen(22:14): As it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

COMMENT: The term "mount of the Lord" was used after the building of the Temple by king Solomon 450 years after the death of Moses.

Gen(36:31): These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edon before their reigned any king over the children of Israel.

COMMENT: Clearly written after the period of Judges.

EX(16:35): And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years until they came to a land inhabited : they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

Josh(5:12): And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more.

COMMENT: Israel did not stop eating manna during the lifetime of Moses! This happened during the time of Joshua when the Israelites were encamped in Gigzal. So this must have been written after Moses.

Num(21:3): And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites: and they utterly destroyed them and their cities : and he called the name of the place Hormah.

COMMENT: This must have been added after Joshua since Canaanites had not been destroyed during Moses' own time.

Deut(1:1-5): Are in fact the preface to the book and not written by Moses.

Deut(2:12): The Horim also dwelt in Seir before time; but the children of Essau succeeded them...

COMMENT: This is about the time Israel had taken possession of the Promised Land much later than Moses.

Deut(3:11): For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants.

COMMENT: David is supposed to have killed Goliath the giant. The text was therefore written after David's time.

Deut(17:9): And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the Judge that shall be in those days....

COMMENT: Clearly written much later than Moses as it mentions "the Judge" referring to the period of Judges long after Moses.

Deut(17:15): Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee...

COMMENT: Clearly written much later than Moses as it mentions the period of "Kings".

Josh(8:32): And he (Joshua) wrote upon the stone a copy of the Law of Moses ...

COMMENT: Which shows that it was short — not the five books from Genesis to Deutronomy, called the Pentateuch.

CONCLUSION: It is now universally accepted, except by diehard fundamentalists, that Moses is not the author of any of the books attributed to him and that these were compiled more than a thousand years after Moses.

DID EZRA WRITE THE LAW?

II Esd(14:21-22): For thy Law has been burned and so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done by thee. If then I have found favour before thee, send the Holy Spirit into me, and I will write everything that happened in the world from the beginning, the things which were written in the Law, that men may be able to find the path, and that those who wish to live in the last days may live.

II Esd(14:48): And I did so. (Syriac manuscripts add: in the seventh year of the sixth week, five thousand years and three months and twelve days after creation. At that time Ezra was caught up, and taken to the place of those who are like him, after he had written all these things. And he was called the scribe of the Most High).

COMMENT: It is generally stated that (I and II) Chronicles were compiled by Ezra with the help of Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. If there are clear differences in these books as we shall see later, despite the efforts of three prophets then the authenticity of other books, whose authors are not known, must also be doubtful.

WHO WAS EZRA?

"Strictly speaking Ezra was not a prophet. What, then, is he doing in this book? If he were alive and preaching today, many people would object to what he stood for. Yet he and his colleague, Nehemiah, are among Judaism's most respected historic personalities. In fact there are two books in the Bible which bear their names, and a third one, the Book of Ruth, was

written sometime after their deaths to refute what they taught" (Balfour Brickner & Albert Vorspan: Searching The Prophets For Values).

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book. These were separated into two books by (St.) Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin which is now known as the Vulgate.

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF JOSHUA ?

Josh(4:9): And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

Josh(4:10):..... Until everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto people.

Josh(14:13): And Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb.

COMMENT: The name Hebron was given long after Joshua.

Josh(10:13): Is not this written in the book of Jasher.

COMMENT: Jasher was apparently contemporary of David, and may even be later than him (see II Sam 1:18).

Josh(24:25): So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day....

Josh(24:26): And Joshua wrote these books of the law of God.....

Josh(24:27): And Joshua said unto all the people.

Josh(24:28): So Joshua let all the people depart.

Josh(24:29): ...Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died.

Josh(24:39): ... And they buried him.

COMMENT: These verses clearly show narration of Joshua's life by someone other than Joshua himself.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

According to GNB Dan(2:47:28) were written in Aramaic (KJV: Syr'i-ack). The rest was written in Hebrew. Author: Unknown.

WHO WROTE "JEREMIAH"?

Jere(26:7): So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah.

Jere(26:20): Urijah...prophecised against the city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah...

Jere(26:24): Nevertheless the land of Ahikan the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah.....

Jere(28:5): Then the prophet Jeremiah said.....

Jere(28:6): Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen.

Jere(36:27): Jehoiakim, king of Judah ...burnt the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah....

COMMENT: All this clearly written long after Jeremiah.

WHO WROTE JOB ?

Job(42:17): So Job died, being old and full of day. [Then who wrote the book of Job?]

CONFUSING DATES

"The dates in the two books I Kg & II Kg do not agree". William MacDonald (Kingdom Divided) gives the following reasons: This is because the people of Israel and those of Judah

used different methods to count the number of years their kings ruled over the people. Another reason is that two kings often ruled together for a while. However, it is noteworthy that "the two books of Kings were at first only one book.... divided when the Old Testament was translated into Greek.

Whatever the reason, it is apparent that the writer(s) did not take care to reconcile the dates and wrote as they pleased. This is not expected of an "inspired" book especially as originally it was one book. It is possible that in fact there were many smaller books and someone haphazardly combined these into one!

APOCRYPHAL REFERENCES

Jude(9): Yet the archangel Michael when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

COMMENT: This is an apparent reference to "The Assumption of Moses", a book written by some Palestinian Jew during the lifetime of Jesus. It is considered apocryphal both by the Jews and the Christians (Catholic and Protestant alike) but Jude thought it fit to quote it in what is now an 'inspired' document.

Jude(14): And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of saints.

COMMENT: This is from the book of Enoch, written about 100 B.C., which is apocryphal both to the Jews and the Christians (both Catholic and Protestants)

MISSING SCRIPTURES

Josh(8:34): And he [Joshua] read all the words of the law, the blessing and cursings according to all that is written in the book of the law.

COMMENT: There is no clue of this "book of Law" containing blessings and cursings, Who wrote it and when. It does not exist any more.

II Esd(14:44-48): In forty days ninety four books were written... publish the twenty four books that you wrote first, for the worthy and the unworthy to read, but keep the seventy books that were written last, to hand down to the wise men among your people.... and I did so. [These "Inspired words of God" are now lost.]

Ex(24:7): The book of the Covenant.

Num(21:14): The book of the Wars of the Lord.

Josh(10:13), II Sam(1:18): Book of Jasher.

I Sam(10:25): The book on the Rights and Duties of Kings (By Samuel).

II Kg(11:41): The book of Acts of Solomon.

II Kg(13:8): The book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

II Kg(21:25): The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

I Chr(29:30): The book of Samuel the Seer, The book of Nathan the Prophet, The book of Gad the Seer.

II Chr(9:29): The prophecy of Alljah the Silonite, Vision of Iddo the Seer.

II Chr(12:15): The book of Shamaiah the prophet. The book of Iddo the Seer.

II Chr(13:22): The Book of Iddo the Seer, Story of the prophet Iddo.

II Chr(16:11,36:8): Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

II Chr(20:34): The book of Jehu ben Hanani.

<u>II Chr(26:22):</u>	Acts of Uzziah (By Isaiah).
<u>II Chr(33:18):</u>	The book of the Kings of Israel.
<u>II Chr(35:25):</u>	Lamentation of Jeremiah.
<u>II Chr(32:32):</u>	The book of Judah and Israel.
<u>Neh(12:23):</u>	Book of the Chronicles.
<u>II Cor(2:3):</u>	Letter to Corinthians (1.5?) by Paul.
<u>Col(4:16):</u>	Letter to Laodicians (see "Early Christian Writings" later).

MORE MISSING WRITINGS

In addition to the missing books that are mentioned in the Bible itself, a very large number of "sacred writings" and read as such in various places are known to be missing.

We are already familiar with the books known to the Protestants as Apocrypha which are canonical to the Roman Catholic Church. These are the books that were part of the (original) Greek Old Testament but not of the (original) Hebrew Old Testament. In addition to these controversial books, there were also other books which the Roman Catholic Church itself calls Apocryphal, as these were not included in both the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament. To the Protestants these are known as "pseudepigrapha", which means "writings of falsely ascribed authorship". This was not an unusual occurring as authors would often ascribe names of some famous people to their own writings, "a literary device to enhance the dignity of an imaginative work". If this be the criteria then many books in the present Bible itself would not stand the scrutiny. For example, we really do not know who really wrote the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and John. Authorship of Luke, Acts, and the Hebrews is only conjectured. The same is the case for a number of other books in the Old as well as the New Testament including letters of Paul himself, James, Peter and John. According to EJC. "The history of the establishment of the Old Testament canon, which is to say, the decision whether or not a given book was inspired, is full of uncertainties.... the rationale for accepting or rejecting books for this category is not always clear. All that can be said is that a modern panel of religious teachers might well question the inclusion of certain books now found in the Hebrew Bible and advocate the inclusion of others found only in the Greek Bible".

Like in the Old Testament, there are uncertainties about the contents of the New Testament books themselves. For example, the sequence in Paul's letter to the Philippians is confusing and some suspect that a chapter between the present Chapters 2 and 3 may be missing. Something is amiss after verse 10 in Chapter 4. Paul's calling himself a "fool" (II Corinthians 11:17-21) as well as his disclaimour of divine guidance and knowledge (I Cor 7:10,12, II Cor 12:23) raises various doubts about the status of these "letters" which in any case were not meant to be included in a religious canon.

Listed below are some book which are known to have existed as "religious writings" at various times. Many of these are lost, some are extant.

QUMRAN (Dead Sea) Scrolls

The Book of Jubilees

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*

The (Ethiopic) book of Enoch

Genesis Apocryphon

The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness (Manual of Discipline)

Hadayat (Book of Praises)
Books of Ordinances (Several)

It is interesting to note that copies of some Qumran books, e.g. Psalms, differ both in content and sequence from their counterparts in the Old Testament.
[Books marked with an asterisk (*) are included in the Forgotten Books of Eden].

SOME PSEUDEPIGRAPHAL WRITINGS

The Lives of the Prophets
Ascension of Isaiah
Parallipomena of Jeremiah
The Testament of Job
Apocalypse of Moses
The Assumption of Moses
Life of Adam and Eve
I & II Books of Adam and Eve

III Baruch
The book of the Secrets of Enoch (II Enoch)
The Psalms of Solomon
The Odes of Solomon
Apocalypse of Baruch.
The Letter of Aristeas*
The Fourth Book of Maccabees
The Story of Ahikar*

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITINGS

"The compilation of the Bible was not an act of any definite occurrence. It was a matter complicated and abstruse. It was an evolution at the hands of Church men of various beliefs and purposes. In the formulation of early church doctrines there was dissension, personal jealousy, intolerance, persecution, bigotry.... by circumstances much writing of as pure purpose and as profound sincerity as that is included in the authorized Bible, must have been omitted? The story of the first council of Nice, when Arius was commanded by the Bishop of Alexandria to quit his beliefs or be declared a heretic, and his writings were ordered destroyed, is eloquent of many things that happened" (preface to LBB).

The Gospel of the Birth of Mary
The Protevangelion
The (first) Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ
Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ
(Some consider it as part of the Gospel of the Birth of Mary)

The Gospel of Nicodemus
Acts of Pontius Pillate
Paul's Epistle to the Laodicians
Paul's Epistle to Seneca (including Seneca's reply)
Acts of Paul and Thecla

Clement's (two) Epistle to the Corinthians (I & II Clement) (These Epistles are included in Codex Alexandrianus which some churches considered as "inspired").

The Gospel According to Peter (now mostly lost, considered by some to have held a place of honour, comparable to that assigned to the four gospels, perhaps even higher than some of them).

The General Epistle of Barnabas (considered genuine by Origen and Jerome. Bishop Fell considered that it ought to be treated with the same respect as several of the books of the present canon.

Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians
Epistle of Ignatius to Magnesians

The Shephard of Hermas
I Hermas: Visions

Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians
 Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians
 Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnacans
 Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp
 Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians

II Hermas: Commands
 III Hermas: Similitude
 (Codex Sinaiticus includes these books).
 Letters of Herod and Pilate

[The above books are included in The Lost Books of The Bible. According to Dr. Talmage these "Apocryphal Books of the New Testament show a great deal of the early life of Christ not to be found in the four Evangelists"].

Acts of Paul
 Acts of John
 Act of Philip
 Gospel of Perfection
 Gospel of Judas
 Gospel of Philips
 Gospel of Mary Magdalene
 Gospel of the Ebionites
 Gospel of the Nazarenes
 Epistle of the Apostles
 Wisdom of Jesus Christ
 Testament of the Lord

Letter of Paul to Alexandrianus
 (Two) Apocypses of the (two) Jameses
 Apocypse of Virgin Mary
 Apocypse of Peter
 Apocypse of Philip
 Apocypse of Stephan
 Apocypse of Thomas
 Teachings of the Apostles
 Kerygma of Peter
 The Dialogue of the Redeemer
 Acts of Andrew and Mathias Among the Cannibals

Some LESSER KNOWN WORKS

Gospel According to the Twelve Apostle
 Writings of Bartholomew The Apostle
 Gospel of Bartholomew
 Gospel of Basilides
 Gospel of Scythianus
 Gospel of Thaddaeus
 Gospel of Valentinus (Gnostic)
 Gospel of Marcion
 Gospel of the Encratites
 Gospel of Mathias
 Gospel of Eve
 The Book of Helkesaities
 Gospel of Jude
 The Book of James
 The Book of Lentitus
 Acts of the Apostles by Leucius
 A Hymn of Christ (Taught to his disciples)

Acts of the Apostles by Lentitus
 Acts of the Apostles by Seleucus
 Acts of the Apostles by Leontius
 Acts of the Apostles by Leuthon
 Acts of the Apostles (used by the Manichees)
 Acts of Peter
 Acts of Thomas
 The Doctrine of Peter
 The Judgment of Peter
 The Preaching of Peter
 Revelation of Paul
 Hymn of the Pearls
 Revelation of Cerinthus
 Revelation of Stephens
 An Epistle of Christ to Peter and Paul
 The Catholic Epistle of Theinison to Montanist

The above list has been compiled from references given in Encyclopedia Britannica (15th Edition) and The Lost Books of the Bible. Some of the books are presently available while some are lost although they have existed.

In addition to these and such other writings there were works of compilation such as Titian's Diatessaron which was a condensation of what is contained in the present canon of the

four Gospels. This work was used in the Syriac church until 5th century C.E. Another known work was Didache.

The DIDACHE, also called the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is a brief manual of the early Christian Church. It was probably written in Syria during the second half of the first century, although some scholars suggest a second century composition. The first part is a moral treatise describing the way of the good and the way of the evil. The second part contains instructions on baptism, fasting, prayer, the Eucharist, matters of church organization, apostles, prophets, bishops, and deacons. Although partially paraphrased in other ancient documents, the Didache was unknown until Philotheos Bryennios, later the Orthodox metropolitan of Nicomedia, discovered it in 1873 at the monastery of the Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople. (SOURCE: The Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia, 1992 Edition)

NAG HAMMADI DOCUMENTS

In December 1945 in Nag Hammadi a small village in Upper Egypt an Arab peasant accidentally discovered a jar containing some old documents buried in soft soil in a cave. These turned out to be fifty two texts themselves of Coptic translations made sometimes between 350-400 C.E. of documents most probably written during 120-150-400 C.E. Some of the original sources may have been as early as 50-100 C.E. which makes them earlier than the four canonical Gospels presently included in the New Testament itself. This fact underlines the diversity (confusion!) prevailing among the Christians even as early as the first century of the Christian era. The main texts discovered at Nag Hammadi are listed below:

Authoritative Teaching	The Dialogue of the Saviour
Apocalypse of Paul	Hypostasis of Archon
Apocalypse of Peter	Treatise on Resurrection
Apocryphon/Secret Book of John	Paraphrase of Shen
Book of Thomas the Contender	Letter of Peter to Philip
Second Treatise of the Great Seth	On the Origin of the World
Gospel/Testimony of Truth	Secret Book of James
Gospel of the Egyptians	Trimorphic Pretennoia
Gospel of Philip	Perfect Mind.
Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)	

These documents were written by the Gnostic sect of Christianity. The official Christianity after Emperor Constantine so successfully curbed any dissension and "heretic" documents that until recently all that was known about most divergent views has been from vitriolic orthodox (Catholic) attacks on these heresies. Nag Hammadi find is therefore an opening of a major window into early Christian "heresy".

Gnostics believed that the disciples, deluded by a very great error, imagined that Christ had risen from the dead in bodily form... understand his resurrection in spiritual, not physical, terms. They also rejected church authority and that anyone has direct experience with God.

MORE GNOSTIC WRITINGS

Great Announcement	Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth,
Interpretation of the Knowledge/Gnosis	

WHERE IS THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS?

MK(3:10): (Jesus said) "And the gospel must first be published among all nations".

Mark, Matthew, Luke and John have written Gospels "according" their own genius. Actually we do not know the real names of the authors. The present names were "assigned" to these documents sometimes after 180 C.E. These four books substantially differ from each other even though the first three are called "Synoptic". These are mostly stories and myths about Jesus' life and contain very little about his teachings. Where is the Gospel of which Jesus himself seems to be talking about? The best that can be said is that Jesus was talking about the "good news" (GOSPEL) of the Kingdom of Heaven which never materialized in his own lifetime. The "abomination of desolation" can hardly be called "good news" for the Jews. What then was Jesus' really teaching?

SOME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORS (According to NAB)

MATTHEW: ...Written in Jewish milieu, probably after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. ... 600 of Mark's 661 verses found in Matthew.

MARK: According to Papias(135 A.D.) the author of the second gospel was Mark who served as Peter's "interpreter" (editor of Petrine material?). Irenaeus(C. 202), Clement of Alexandria (C. 215), Tertullian(C. 220), and Origen(C. 254) attest a similar relationship .. Modern scholarship has shown quite clearly that Mark's sources cannot be explained solely in terms of Peter's preaching.

LUKE: Most scholars agree that Luke made use of Mark's gospel as one of his sources ... Early Christian tradition ascribes the companion volumes of Lucan gospel and the Acts of the Apostles to approximately 75 A.D., and identifies the author with Luke the physician friend of St. Paul.[However, hardly anything beyond this is known about the author himself, even though Luke may be the author, as alleged].

JOHN: The reputed author of the fourth gospel was John, son of Zebedee — while the attestation of this tradition is impressive, it should be remembered that for the ancients authorship was a much broader concept than it is today. In their time a man could be called the "author" of a work if he was the authority behind it, even though he did not write it. Modern critical analysis makes it difficult to accept the idea that the gospel as it now stands was written by one man... within the gospel itself there are signs of disorder...

ACTS: In Acts, Luke has provided a broad survey ... His preoccupation with the mystery of the Church as the bearer of the word of salvation rules out of his book detailed histories of the various members of the Twelve.

TIMOTHY(I & II), TITUS: Some scholars are convinced that Paul could not have been responsible for the vocabulary and style of the letters ... The problem of the literary authorship of the pastorals has not disproved the authenticity of their content. If Paul is considered their more immediate author, they are to be dated between the end of his Roman imprisonment and his execution under Nero; if they are regarded as only more remotely Pauline, their date may be as late as the early second century.

[Author's COMMENT: If their authorship is questionable, so ought to be their credibility].

HEBREWS: There are numerous features of this epistle that indicate authorship other than that of St. Paul the apostle.

JAMES: Not all scholars are satisfied that James, leader of the Jerusalem community, is the author.

I PETER: Since the early nineteenth century... many scholars have considered it a pseudonymous work.

II PETER: Early Christian tradition was not so impressed by the claim of Petrine authorship of this epistle as to concede its authenticity without question. Both Origen and St. Jerome found it debatable.....It is not unreasonable to conclude that 2 Peter was written by an unknown author who followed the pseudonymous convention of the time in order to attract readers to his work.

[Author's COMMENTS: Due to serious doubts about its authorship this epistle was not included in the Canon until fifth century C.E.]

I JOHN: Majority of scholars have concluded from its resemblance to the fourth gospel ... one author was responsible for both works. These resemblances are not so compelling as absolutely to exclude the possibility of separate authors.

II & III JOHN: In each the writer calls himself "the elder" ... The identity of the elder is a problem ... It is doubtful that the elder who wrote III John was an apostle.

JUDE: The epistle purports to have been written by Jude ... Since this claimant is not identified as one of the Twelve, he is presumably not Jude the apostle ... Since he invokes the name of James by way of introducing himself, he seems not to have been very well known among the Christians to whom he wrote.

REVELATION: The Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse, is the last book of the Bible and perhaps the least read ... The author of the book calls himself John ... Although he never claims to be apostle of the same name, many of the early church Fathers so identified him. This identification is not altogether certain.

AUTHOR'S COMMENT: Most of the books of the Bible are such that their authorship is unknown, or at best doubtful. Such books cannot form the basis of a true faith.

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APPENDIX II

ALL THIS IN THE BIBLE

O GOD

Bible treats God as if He was a folklore hero. Just a few examples:

GOD OF THE HEBREWS

God is portrayed in the Bible as belonging only to the Hebrews. See for example EX 5:3, 9:1, 10:3, etc.

II Kg(5:15): There is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.

GOD UNAWARE OF WHAT HE CREATED

Gen(1:3-4): "And God said, let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good". This goes on for everything that is created which God finds to be "good", not knowing the mischief the "man" will be capable of doing. If He did creat man in his own image(Gen 1:27) then why did man not know the difference between good and evil?

GOD NOT SINCERE

Eze (20:25): I also gave them over to statutes that were not good and judgments they could not live by.

Heb(7:18): Had that first covenant been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.

SATAN KNOWS BETTER THAN GOD. OR WAS GOD CHEATING?

Gen(2:17): God forbade man from eating the fruit of a certain tree of knowledge "from the day that thou eateth thereof thou shalt surely die". Apparently God was not telling the truth and wanted man to remain ignorant, without knowledge. But man proved to be clever and gave names to every creature. This happened even before the woman was created.

After the woman is created Satan comes to her in the form of a serpent and tells her "ye shall surely not die"(Gen 3:4). Satan turns out to be right as after eating the forbidden fruit the man and the women not only did not die, but as Lord God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil"(Gen 3:22). Apologists state that the death that God mentioned was spiritual, not physical. If it were so then Adam(and Eve) should have died only spiritually, but not physically as they did.

God jealous of his own creation?

A JEALOUS GOD

Deut(4:24): The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

GOD CONFOUNDS PEOPLE

Gen(11:5-7): And the Lord came to see the city and the tower [of Babel] which the children of man builded. And the Lord said Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them.

Which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's 'speech'.

11 Thess(2:11): And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

COMMENT: Yet God wants all to be saved(1 Tim 2:4)!

GOD TEMPTS

Gen(22:1): And God did tempt Abraham.

GOD TAKES A WALK

Gen(3:8): And they heard the voice of God walking in the garden.

Gen(5:22-24): And Enoch walked with God.

Job(22:14): He walks on the boundary between earth and sky.(GNB Foot Note: The horizon was regarded as a great circle where the earth met the sky and where God inspected the earth by walking around it).

GOD NEEDS REST

Gen(2:2): "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made and he rested on the seventh day from all of his work which he had made." Yet Jesus contradicted this: "My Father has never yet ceased his work"(JN 5:17).

GOD UNAWARE

Gen(3:9): And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?

Gen(3:11): And he said ... Hast thou eaten of the tree?

Gen(4:9): And the Lord said unto Cain, where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

Gen(18:20-21): And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

Gen(6:3): His days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Yet Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years(Gen 5:5). Also Methuselah lived nine hundred sixty and nine years(Gen 5:27).

GOD UNCERTAIN

GEN(18:20,26): And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous: I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

IS GOD FOOLISH AND WEAK?

1 Cor(1:25): The foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man.

GOD IS DEFEATED

Gen(32:24): And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day ... And he said thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed ... And Jacob called the name of the place Pe-ni-el: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

GNB(Footnote): Israel: he struggles with God or God struggles.

Also: "By his strength he had power with God. Yeah, he had power over the angel, and prevailed(Hos 12:3). It seems God had come in the form of an angel.

THE SEA FIGHTS GOD

Job(26:12): It is his strength that conquered the sea(GNB Footnote: A reference to an ancient story in which the sea fought God).

GOD MISLEADS

II Sam(24:1-10): And again the anger of God was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah ... And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done.

Eze(20:25): I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.

GOD REPENTS

Gen(1:3-4): When God created, He saw that everything was good.

Gen(1:27): In his own image he created man.

COMMENT: Yet, it repented the Lord that he had made man on earth, and it grieved him at his heart(Gen 6:6). Indeed God is made to repent many a times.

Ex(32:14): And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

I Sam(15:35): The Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

II Sam(24:15-16): So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel... and when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of evil.

GOD HARDENS PHARAOH'S HEART AGAINST ISRAEL

Ex(10:1): I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants.

Ex(10:20): The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Ex(10:27): But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

GOD MAKES EZEKIEL EAT DUNG

Eze(4:12-13): And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.

Eze(4:14-15): Then said I, Ah Lord God! Behold, my soul hath not been polluted for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. Then he said unto me, lo, I have given thee cow's dung and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith.

GOD ENCOURAGES CHEATING

1 Kg(22:22): And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth, and do so.

DIVINE INJUSTICE

The story of Jacob's treachery against Esau is given in Gen(26:29-34) which reveals how Jacob cheated his own father Isaac posing as Esau and extracted his blessings and how treacherously he treated Esau to get the right of inheritance which rightly belonged to Esau. YET:

Mal(1:2-3): Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: Yet I loved Jacob. And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

Heb(12:16): Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

COMMENT: Esau's sin for which the Lord hated him is not given in the Bible. Actually Esau had been wronged by Jacob who cheated him out of his birthright by demanding the birthright in exchange for food when Esau was famished.

CONFUSION OVER GOD

Isa(44:8): Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Rev(21:6-7): I will be his God and he shall be my son.

ALL HAVE SINNED(Rom 3:23)

Ps(14:2-3): They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt, there is none that does good, no, not one.

LK(18:19): No one is good, except God alone.

IN(8:40): The sheep paid no heed to any who came before me, for these were all thieves and robbers. *I have told you the truth, which I have heard of God, this did not Abraham.*

CONDEMNED NON-SINNERS

Rom(5:14): Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

COMMENT: Paul condemns all those who lived before Moses, yet admits that among them were those who had not sinned.

WHO IS WHO?

Isa(43:27):

KJV: Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

GNB: Your earliest ancestors sinned; your leaders sinned against me.(Footnote: A reference either to Jacob or to Abraham, or possibly Adam).

ABRAHAM SURRENDERS HIS WIFE TO SAVE HIMSELF

Gen(12:11-17): He said to Sarai his wife, behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon...The Egyptians shall see thee that they shall say, this is his wife: and they shall kill me, but they will save thee alive: Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister .. the

princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake ... and the Lord plagued Pharaoh ... because of Sarai ... and Pharaoh called Abram and said what is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why didst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife. Now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

Gen(20:2-12): And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah...she herself said he is my brother ... then Abimelech called Abraham and said unto him what hast thou done unto us? And Abraham said because I thought, Surely fear of God is not in this place and they will slay me for my wife's sake, And yet indeed she is my sister: she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother and she became my wife.

COMMENT: It seems in ancient times men could marry their sisters from different mothers. Leviticus(18:9) and Deutromony(27:22) is a Mosaic law laid down later. The great similarity between the two incidents raises the question if it was indeed the same incident differently narrated by two versions which were later compiled and combined into one book!

ABRAHAM HOODWINKS

Gen(22:7-9): And Isaac spake unto Abraham where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

COMMENT: According to R.E. Harlow(Start of The Race — Studies in Genesis): Abraham knew by faith that God would provide an animal(22:8). Thus Abraham was really not sacrificing his son but carrying out a farce.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HIS FATHER?

Gen(26:7): Isaac lies to king Abimelech that Rebekah [his wife] is his sister in order to ensure his own safety(Gen 26:7).

COMMENTS: This seems to be the case of mistaken identity by two different authors of ancient folklore history. The stories were combined when some unknown compilers tried to reconcile different texts.

SARAH, THE GRAND MOTHER OF THE JEWS, TELLS LIES

Gen(18:12): Therefore Sarah laughed within herself.

Gen(18:15): Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not for she was afraid. And he said, Nay: but thou didst laugh.

LOT: INCEST

Gen(19:30-36): And Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain and his two daughters with him ... and the firstborn said unto the younger ... come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve seed of our father .. Thus were both daughters of Lot with child by their father.

REUBEN: INCEST

Gen(35:22): And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine.

JACOB'S VERDICT: Reuben thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and excellency of my power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed, then defileth by it; he went upto my couch.

COMMENT: This is a folklore rhetoric penned long after the era of Moses when various tribes of Israel had been established in Palestine and had developed inter-tribal rivalries.

JUDAH: INCEST

Gen(38:6-15): And Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, whose name was Tamar, And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onen, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onen knew that the seed should not be his ... And the things which he did displeased the Lord: wherefor he slew him also. Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.... And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father-in-law goeth on to Timnath to shear his sheep. And she put her widow's garments off from her and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be harlot: because she had covered her face.

It transpires that Judah goes unto her and she conceives twins Phares and Zarah. This woman Tamar and her son Phares are listed in the genealogy of Jesus(MT 1:3).

MOSES TEACHES STEALING

Ex(12:35-36): And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses: and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lend unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

Moses had done as God had told him to do(Ex 3:22).

JACOB CHEATS

Gen(Ch.27): Rebecea, mother of Jacob, coaxed Jacob to pose as his elder brother Essau in order to get blessings of his blind father Isaac. Jacob, the progenator of the Jews, refused to feed Essau when he was dying due to hunger and offered food only when Essau agreed to forego his birthright of his father's inheritance. Jacob then went to Isaac posing as Essau and obtained his blessings.

LEWDNESS AT THE TABERNACLE

1 Sam(2:22): Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation.

COMMENT: Incidentally there was no relevance of this in the story. It seems to be included for lewd interest.

PROPHET HANANIAH, A LIAR!

Jer(28:15): Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now Hananiah, the Lord hath not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

ANOTHER PROPHET TELLS LIE

1 Kg(13:18): He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of Lord, saying, bring him back ... but he lied unto him.

POLYGAMOUS DAVID

Deut(17:17): Neither shall he [the King] multiply wives.

COMMENT: David had many wives(1 Kg 10:28). It is interesting to note that the book of Deuteronomy is supposed to have been authored by Moses when there was no question about having kings among the Israelites!

DAVID AND BETHSHEBA: ADULTERY & DECEIT

II Sam(11:2-14): And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself: and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said is not this Beth-she-ba the daughter of E-b-am, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers and took her: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived and told David, and said, I am with child .. And it came to pass in the morning that David wrote a letter to Jo-ab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die.

YET DAVID WAS RIGHTEOUS

I Kg(14:8): And David kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to that only which was right in mine eyes.

I Sam(13:14,16); PS(89:20), Acts(13:22): I have found David the son of Jesse a man after mine own heart which shall fulfil all my will.

COMMENT: God seems to be happy with David inspite of four capital crimes: robbery and violence, adultery, conspiracy with intent to murder, consorting with enemy. Yet He chastises him for obeying His own command "Go, number Israel"(II Sam 24:1).

DAVID'S SON: INCEST

II Sam(13:1,11,14): And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar: and Amnon the son of David loved her ...And when she had brought them upto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, come lie with me my sister. How be it he would not hearken unto her voice: but being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

DAVID'S SON RAVISHES HIS WIVES

II Sam(16:22): So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; And Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

COMMENT: Not only did Absalom commit incestual adultery with his "mothers" all Israel stood by and let this happen without any admonishment. Yet David ordered that "Beware that none touch the young man Absalom"(1 Sam 18:12).

SOLOMON WORSHIPS OTHER GODS

1 Kg(11:4): When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON!

1 Chr(28:1): Ahaz ... did not which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father.

1 Kg(22:2): And he(JOSIAH) did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of David his father.

COMMENT: Was David right or wrong?

SAMSON: ADULTERY

1 Kg(16:1): Then went Samson to Gaza and saw there an harlot and went into her.

JEREMIAH LIES

Jer(38:24,27): Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die .. and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived [GNB: There was nothing else they could do, because no one had overheard the conversation].

HAVE ALL SINNED?

Ps(14:5): God is with the generation of the righteous.

MK(2:17): I do not come to invite virtuous people but sinners. [This assumes that there were indeed some virtuous people]

MT(13:17): Many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see.

MT(5:45): He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Acts(10:34-45): God has no favourites, but that in every nation the man who is God fearing and does what is right is acceptable to him.

1N(5:18): Any one born of God does not sin ... No child of God is a sinner.

1 Jn(3:9): Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Rom(5:15): Death held sway from Adam to Moses even over those who had not sinned as Adam did.

COMMENT: These verses show that there must have been some good, righteous, sinless people.

WERE THEY ALL SINNERS?

ABEL & ZECHARIAH

MT(23:35): That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, who you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

Heb(11:4): By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gift.

1In(3:12): And not like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother and why did he murder his? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

NOAH, DANIEL, JOB

Eze(14:14): Noah, Daniel, Job ... by their righteousness ..

Job(1:8): Job ... none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man.

SAMSON

Jdg(13:5): The child shall be a Nazarite from the womb.

Jdg(14:16): And the spirit of the Lord came mighty upon him(Samson).

Jdg(16:17): I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb.

Heb(11:32-33): Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets .. who through faith ...

DANIEL

Dan(6:4): Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the Kingdom: but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.

Dan(6:22): I was found blameless before him: and also before you, O. King, I have done no wrong.

HEZEKIAH

II Kg(18:6-7): for he held fast to the Lord: he did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him, wherever he went forth he prospered.

Isa(38:2-3): I have walked before thee in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good, in thy sight.

SAMUEL

1 Sam(12:4): And they said, thou hast not defrauded us nor oppressed us, neither has thou taken ought of any man's hand.

CYRUS

Isa(45:1): Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus.

ZECHARIAS AND ELIZABETH

LK(1:6): And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

LK(1:4): Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

LK(2:67): Zechariahs was filled with the Holy Ghost.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

LK(1:15): Filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

LK(1:66): the hand of thy Lord was with him.

JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF MARY

MT(1:19): And her husband Joseph being a just man ..

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

Was she too a sinner?

SIMEON

LK(2:25): And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon: and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

CORNELIUS

Acts(10): A religious man ... regular in prayers to God ... An angel of God ... said ... your prayers and acts of charity have gone up to speak for you before God.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

According to MT(27:3) Judas repented. Is he saved?

JESUS, SON OF MARY

Paul came after Jesus and proclaimed "All have sinned"(Rom 3:23). Was Jesus too a sinner? After all, he did offer himself for baptism, which is for confessing/repentance/forgiveness for sins!

Rom(8:3): Sending his own son in a form like of our own sinful nature.

LUSTFUL TEXT

HOT SPOT

1 Kg(1:1-2): Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he got no heat. Wherefor his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin; and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lay in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.

LEWDNESS

Eze(23:2-3, etc.): Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: And they committed whoredom in Egypt; they committed whoredom in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity .. all of them desirable young men ... on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself .. in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her...these discovered her nakedness...and the Babylonians came

to her into the bed of love and they defiled her with their whoredom and discovered her nakedness...For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses ... bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

Prov(7:13-22): So she caught him and kissed him and with an impudent face said unto him ... I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt, I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning. Let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey ... He goes after her straightway.

Song(1:13): A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

Song(3:1): By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not.

Song(7:1-4): How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the works of the hand of a cunning workman. Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor, thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins. Thy neck is as a tower of ivory ...

Song(8:3,8,10): His left hand should be under my head and his right hand should embrace me ... We have a little sister, and she has no breast. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? ... I am a wall and my breasts like towers.

HAVE NO MERCY

THE COMMANDMENT

Ex(20:13), Deut(5:17): "Thou shalt not kill".

'Yet there are repeated exhortations in the Bible to kill and plunder mercilessly. Indeed there are frequent exultations on such atrocities.

Ps(137:8-9): O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

DESTROY IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

Iosh(22:20): "devoted things...."

NIV Footnote: The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord, often by totally destroying them.

KILL, KILL, KILL

Ex(22:24): And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword and your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless.

1 Sam(15:2-3): Thus saith the Lord of hosts Now go smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

1 Sam(15:8): And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

- Num(31:1-18): and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel ... they slew the kings of Midianites and beside the rest of them that were slain ... and children of Israel took all the women of Midianite captives, and their little ones ... Now therefore kill every male among the little ones and kill every women that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourself.
- Deut(2:34): And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city we left none to remain.
- Deut(12:2): Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods.
- Deut(22:18): Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.
- Deut(20:10-16): When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against ... and if it make no peace with thee ... thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle shalt thou unto thyself ... thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.
- Deut(21:18-21): If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother ... all the men of his city shall stone him with stones.
- Josh(6:21-27): And they destroyed all that was in the city both man and woman, young and old and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword .. so the Lord was with Joshua.
- Josh(7:19-25): And Joshua said unto A'Chan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And A'Chan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned ... And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took A'Chan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of A'Chor And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.
- COMMENT: Besides being cruel this is a violation of Deut(24:16): "Everyone shall be put to death for his own sin". Yet all the family of A'Chan and his animals were killed for his sins, even though Joshua talked to him in confidence.
- Josh(8:22): And they smote them, so they let none of them remain or escape...when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field all the Israelites returned into Ai and smote it at the edge of the sword both men and women.
- Josh(10:13): And the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.
- Josh(10:26): And afterward Joshua smote them, and hanged on five trees and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.
- Josh(10:37): And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein.
- Josh(10:40): So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings, he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded.
- Josh(11:11-12): And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword; utterly destroyed them, there was not any left to breath and he burned Hazor with fire. And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them did Joshua take, and smote

them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded.

Jdg(21:11-12): Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every women that hath lain by man. And they found among the inhabitants ... four hundred young virgins.

1 Sam(12:31): And he(DAVID) brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.

Job(3:10): Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning forks into spears.

Josh(11:20): For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, they should come against Israel in battle, that he may destroy them utterly, and that they may have no favour, but that he may destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.

1 Sam(6:19): And he smote the men of Beth-Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men.

Hos(13:16): Samaria shall become desolate for she hath rebelled against the Lord: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in places, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

1 Sam(15:3): And spare them not; but slay both men and women, infant and suckling, ox, camel and ass.

1 Sam(27:9): And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive...

Jere(49:20): Saith the Lord that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rab-bah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burnt with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs.

Jere(49:29-32): Concerning Kedar ... Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east Arise, get you up to the wealthy nation that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which hath neither the gates nor bars, which dwell alone. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil.

POUNCE ON THE UNWARY

Heb(9:5-7): Go ye after him to the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women ... fill the courts with the slain.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

Jdg(11:30-31): And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord ... that whatsoever cometh forth of the door of my house to meet me, I will offer it up for burnt offering.

Jdg(11:34): And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him.

Jdg(11:39): (He) did with her according to his vow which he had vowed.

GOD APPROVES ATROCITIES

Heb(11:32-34): ... David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets! who through faith subdued kingdoms ... turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

God Approves Atrocities

1 Kg(14:8): ... thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes.

A VENGEFUL GOD

Ps(94:1): O Lord, you God of Vengeance.

Num(25:4,9): And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel ... And those who died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

Num(11:1): And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost part of the Camp.

Num(11:31-33): And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp ... and the people ... gathered the quails ... and while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of God was kindled against them, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.

COMMENT: Can such writings have divine licence, authorised by the loving God? Are these the acts of Man created in the image of God?

IESUS THE KING

LK(19:27): for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.

CUT NO TREES:

It is often stated that Bible does not allow even cutting of trees during a war. This is only a part of the story plucked out of context. The whole command is as follows:

Deut(21:16-20): But the cities of these people which the Lord doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth ... thou shalt not destroy the trees there of by forcing an axe against them, for thou mayest eat them ... only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down: and thou shalt build bulwarks against that city that maketh war with thee until it be subdued.

FANTASTIC FACTS

MOSES RELUCTANT TO BE A PROPHET

Ex(4) records that Moses expressed apprehension about his capability or acceptance as a prophet so that God had to provide him an assistant in his brother Aaron who was older to him by three years(Ex 7:7).

AARON PERFORMS MIRACLES

The miracles were given to Moses(Ex 4) but performed by Aaron(Ex 7) albeit by God's command. Finally the miraculous rod comes back to Moses(Ex 14:16).

AARON MAKES AN IDOL

While Moses went up the mountain Aaron collected ornaments and fashioned a molten calf as a new god for the Israelites(Ex 32:4).

GOD VOWS PUNISHMENT BUT OVERLOOKS AARON

Ex(32:33,35): And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book ... and the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf which Aaron made.

COMMENT: Similar command was given in Deut(13:1-5). Yet Aaron himself was spared!

THE MISSING COMMANDMENT

The Ten Commandments do not contain any commandment against telling a lie, i.e., there is no commandment saying "thou shalt not lie".

It is argued that the Commandment "Thou shalt not stand false witness against thy neighbour" covers the aspect of being truthful. Unfortunately this is not so, since standing a false witness against your neighbour does not cover lies against those who are not neighbours. The Jews always made distinction between brothers and neighbours against what they considered "strangers". To pious Jews a "neighbour" could only mean another pious Jew, none else. Even "brothers/brethren" to them did not extend beyond the Ishmaelites and the Edomites who were in the generations of Abraham.

WALLS OF JERICHO

Josh(6:3-5) tells us how the walls of Jericho came tumbling down by the blowing of the trumpets by Joshua's army.

FACT: The tumbling down of the walls of Jericho had nothing to do with Joshua's army or their trumpets. The walls had already been destroyed by an earthquake long before the time of Joshua.

UNDUE CREDIT

Josh(Ch 8) tells us the capture and destruction of the town of Ai.

FACT: The town of Ai, south-east of Bethel, was already a heap of ruins by the time Joshua's troops arrived there. "Ai" is simply a Hebrew word for "ruins".

ASTRONOMICAL BLUNDER

Josh(10:13): And the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

FACT: The earth revolves around the sun and not the other way. So it must be that earth stood still. Unfortunately for a long time the Christian church has insisted on the earth being the centre of universe and punished those teaching otherwise.

MISTRANSLATED

1Kg(10:28): The Hebrew word "KOA" has been translated as "linen-yarn" in KJV.

FACT: Actually Koa was a small city state in Asia Minor.

MISPLACED TEXT

According to NEB text of Zech(4:1-3 and 4:11:14) should follow(2:13).

WRONG DIRECTION

Iosh(19:32-34): The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali ... and their coast was from Heleph ... and then the coast turneth westward ... and reaches to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordon toward the sunrising.

FACT: "Toward the sunrising" would indicate towards East: Jordan would actually be on the West and Judah in the South.

MK(Ch.5) Sea of Galilee's eastern shore is stated to be the country of Gedarenes, present day Jerash.

FACT: Jerash is about thirty miles to the South-East, too far away for a story whose setting requires a nearby city with steep slope down to the sea where "the herd of swines ran violently down a steep place into the sea(they were about two thousand) and were choked in the sea"(MK 5:13).

MK(Ch.7): Jesus is reported as going through Sidon on his way to Tyre to the Sea of Galilee.

FACT: Sidon is in the opposite direction. In fact, in the first century C.E. there was no road from Sidon to the sea of Galilee, the road actually being from Tyre.

GOD'S PROMISE NOT FULFILLED

I Kg(2:4):(God to King David). There shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel.

FACT: The kingdom was taken away from the Israelites, their temple destroyed, people made captive and taken to exile!

WRONG COMMAND

MK(10:12): Jesus said: If a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery.

FACT: Jewish women had no right of divorce. Jesus would have known better than that. Was the Gospel writer wrongly inspired?

MISSING GENERATIONS

MT(1:11): And Josiah begat Jechonias..

FACT: Jechonias was actually a grandson of Josiah.

MT(1:8): Joram begat Ozias.

FACT: Joram .. Jehoram .. Ahaziah ... Joash ... Amaziah .. Uzziah/Azariah
(II Chr. Ch. 22:24, 26; II Kg 8; Ch. 12-14).

MT(1:12): Jechoniah begat Salathiel and Salathiel begat Zorobabel.

FACT: Zorobabel was son of Pedaiah who was brother of Jechoniah(I Chr 3:17-19).

MT(1:13): Zorobabel begat A-bi-ud.

FACT: The sons of Zorobabel: Meshullam, and Hamaniah, and Shelo, with their sister(I Chr. 3:19). No Abiud!

LK(3:27): Joanna which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel which was the son of Neri.

I Chr(3:15-10): Sons of Josiah .. first born Johannon ... And the sons of Jeconiah: Assir, Salathiel his son Malchiram also and Pedaiah .. And sons of Pedaiah were Zerubbabel and Shimli; and the sons of Zerubbabel, Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister and Hashubah and Ohel and Berchiaah, and Hasdial. Jushab Hesed, five.

COMMENT: Luke mentions Neri who is nowhere found in the Old Testament. He seems to be ignorant of the genealogies already given therein. Incidentally, Paul advised: "neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies (1 Tim 1:4); "Avoid foolish questions and genealogies" (Tit 3:9).

Deut(3:14): Jair the son of Manasseh

Num(32:40): Jair the son of Manasseh

1 Chr(2:22): And Sequeb begat Jair

WRONG MAN

MK(2:25): Have ye never read what David did .. in the days of Abiathar(the High Priest)?

FACT: High priest's name was Abimelech and not Abiathar!

THE CHRISTMAS STAR

MT (2:1-9): There came wise men from the east in Jerusalem ... the star went before them till it came and stood over where the child was ... in Bethlehem.

FACT 1: Comets move East to West or West to East, not North to South which is the direction of Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

FACT 2: The "Wise men" according to KJV are translated by other major versions thus: "wise men" by RBV, RSV, TJB; "Magi" by NIV(Footnote: wise). "Astrologers" by GNB, MET, NAB, NEB, NIV, NWT, TLB. It seems the "star" these astrologers had seen was in their horoscopes, not in the sky.

FACT 3: If the star was really leading the Magi then why did they go to Herod to ask "where is the new-born king of the Jews"?

"RAISED" BEFORE DEATH

MT(14:1-2): This is John the Baptist .. raised from death.

FACT: John had not yet been executed! ... His execution is recorded later(MT 14:3-12; MK 6:14-16).

DID HE OR DIDN'T HE

IN(3:22): Jesus went to Judaea with his disciples, stayed there with them and baptized.

IN(4:2): It was only the disciples who were baptizing, not Jesus himself.

WRONG COMMANDMENT

MT(19:16-22): "Master what good must I do to gain eternal life"... [Jesus recites the commandments and tells him to sell everything and then he will get into the kingdom of God.]

1 Kg(18:25): Jesus asks: What is written in the Law? The Lawyer replies and Jesus tells him the parable of the Good Samaritan and tells him to do the same.

MISNAMED

1 Kg(1:59-60): "They came to circumcise the child and they called him Zechariah, after the name of his father.

FACT: A Jewish custom? Even to this day pious Jews would not do that.

Jerusalem

LK(13:33): Unthinkable of any prophet to die but in Jerusalem.

FACT: Many prophets died out of Jerusalem.

MANIFOLD

MT(19:29): And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold..."

FANTASTIC to have fathers and mothers hundredfold!

UP OR DOWN

NEW TESTAMENT: And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven(JN 3:13).

OLD TESTAMENT: Enoch walked with God(Gen 5:23); Elijah goes up(II Kg 2:11); Ezra too was caught up(II Esdra 14:48).

QUICK DISPOSAL

Acts(5:1-11): Ananias died after being rebuked by Peter. he was immediately buried.

COMMENT: Ananias was buried quickly without waiting for his wife who was to arrive soon(which she did). This makes the whole episode doubtful or misquoted.

SMALL WORLD

Acts(11:28): Great dearth throughout all the world.

FACT: The famine was only in Judaea.

FALLEN ANGEL

Rev(8:13): And I beheld and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven(KJV).

For hundreds of years English speaking Christian world relied on KJV not suspecting that the translators had somehow mis-translated the Greek word ETOC, an eagle, as an angel! GNB, NEB, NIV, NWT, RBV, RSV, TJB all now translate as "eagle".

SHORT SIGHTED

Gal(3:1): O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified, among you.

FACT: None of the Galatians (as well as Paul himself) saw the crucifixion. Most likely none of those who may have actually been on the scene even visited Galatia.

PRE-EMPTED

IN(9:22): The Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

FACT: This is a historical lapse on the part of the evangelist. Although this was true at the time of writing in his own time, the policy of summary excommunication had not

been adopted during Jesus' time or even in the time of Paul since, both he and Barnabas were themselves preaching in the synagogues. It is noteworthy that this lapse is particularly unexpected if John the Elder/Beloved/Apostle was really the author or even a source of the Gospel attributed to him.

UNWRIT WRIT

LK(1:63): And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John.

COMMENT: Wax tablets could be written on with a pointed stylus and erased by scraping off the top layer of wax. These were common enough household objects in Greece but would have been a rare and expensive luxury in the backwoods of Palestine. In any case it was an unnecessary requirement.

MISTRANSLATED

IN(13:18)/Ps(41:9): Yes, mine own familiar friends, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

FACT: "Lifted up his heel" is not, as far as known, a Hebrew or Greek, or Aramaic idiom. Scholars believe this to be a scribal error. Oddly, the phrase "betrayed me" and "lifted up his heel against me" are identical in Hebrew except for one letter and for this reason the error remained undetected for a long time.

MISUNDERSTOOD

MT(2:6): In Bethlehem, the land of Judah ..

FACT: Bethlehem is not a "land" or a region but a small town.

INSPIRED RACISM

Iere(13:23): Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

ELIAS' LIMITED MISSION?

LK(4:26): But unto none was Elias sent, save unto Serepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

COMMENT: This has a reference to I Kg(17:8-16) wherein the name of the city is given as Zarepath.

ELISHA'S LIMITED POWERS

Lk(4:27): And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus [Elisha] the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

COMMENT: This has a reference to II Kg(5:1-14).

THE TALKING ASS

Num(22:28-30): And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass and she said unto Balaam ... and Balaam said to the ass ... and the ass said to Balaam.

ISAIAH GOES NAKED

Isa(20:2): At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off the shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

GOD SHAVES WITH A HIRED RAZOR

Isa(7:20): In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria.

A PROPHET TAKES A WHORE

Hos(1:2-9): And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms ... So he went and took Goner the daughter of Diblain, which conceived and bare him a son ... Jezreel ... And she conceived again, and bare a daughter ... Lo-ruhamah ... she conceived and bare a son ... Lo-Ammal.

Hos(2:1-5): Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi, and to your sisters Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts. Lest I strip her naked ... and I will not have mercy upon her children for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother had played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully.

EXAGGERATION

Acts(12:23): And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him[Herod], because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

FACT: Herod was afflicted with a skin disease and remained sick for a long time.

DARK FACT

MK(15:33): and when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

LK(23:44-45): And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened

COMMENT: One can imagine darkness fallen over some land, but not over "all the earth". Sun was darkened would indicate the solar eclipse which could not happen on a Passover, which by definition is the time of full moon.

SORRY, WRONG NUMBERS

NOAH'S ARK

Gen(6:20): Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

Gen(7:2-3): Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by seven, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

Gen(7:8-9): Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that crept upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

Gen(6:19,20:7:8,9): Noah brings One pair each.
Gen(7:2,3): ...Seven pairs of each and two each of unclean.

JACOB'S CHILDREN

Gen(46:15): Total children 33.
Actual Count: 34

HOUSE OF JACOB

Acts(7:14): Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, three score and fifteen souls.

Gen(46:27): All the souls of the house of Jacob, which went into EGYPT, were three score and ten.

SONS OF BENJAMIN

Gen(46:21): Ten
1 Chr(7:6): Three
1 Chr(8:1-3): Five

MICHAL'S SONS

II Sam(6:23): Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

II Sam(21:8): five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul.

DAVID'S BROTHERS

I Sam(16:10-13): Again Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel . . . And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remainth yet the youngest David[Total eight].

I Sam(17:12): And David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons.

1 Chr(2:13-15): And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab . . . David the seventh.

PLAGUE VICTIMS

Num(25:9): 24,000 died in the plague.

1 Cor(10:8): 23,000 died in the plague

CHARIOTS

1 Kg(4:26): Solomon's chariots 40,000

II Chr(9:25): Solomon's chariots 4,000

COMMANDERS OF SOLOMON

1 Kg(5:16): 3300

II Chr(2:2): 3600

CHIEFS

- I Sam(23:13): Thirty chiefs
II Sam(23:39): Thirty and seven
I Chr(11:25): Thirty

MISCOUNT

- II Sam(24:9): And Joab gave up the sum of the number of people ... Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men ... men of Judah five hundred thousand men.(ie. 800,000 + 500,000).
I Chr(21:5): And Joab gave the sum ... Israel were thousand thousand and hundred men ... and Judah was four hundred three score and ten thousand men(1,100,000 + 470,000).

PICTURES

- I Kg(7:26): 2000 Pictures
II Chr(4:5): 3000 Pictures

AGE CONFOUNDED

- II Kg(16:2): Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign.
II Kg(17:1): In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea ... to reign.
II KG(18:1-2): In the third year of Hoshea ... Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign.
So Hoshea began to reign when Ahaz was(20+12) 32 years old. Hezekiah began to reign in the third year of Hoshea, that is(32+3) 35 years after the birth of Ahaz. Since Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began to reign then it would imply that Hezekiah was born when his father Ahaz was supposed to be only(32-25) 10 years old.

TWO & TWO NOT FOUR

- II Kg(8:26): Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign.
II Chr.(2:2):

KJV: Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign.
GNB: Some ancient translations "twenty two": Hebrew, "forty-two".
NIV: Some septuagint manuscripts "twenty two: Hebrew "forty two".
NWT, TJB: Twenty two
RBV, RSV: Forty two

Iere(52:28-30): This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty: in the eighteenth years .. eight hundred thirty and two persons: In the three and twentieth year ... seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred(3,023 + 832 + 745 = 4,600).

II Kg(24:14): And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, all the craftsman and smiths(Princes + Men of valour +10,000 + craftsmen and smiths).

Ezra(2:5): Children of Arah 775

Neh(7:10): Children of Arah 652

Mk(5), Lk(8): One mad man

MT(8): Two mad men

Mk(10), Lk(18): One blind man

MT(20): Two blind men

COMMENT: Matthew seems to bring in "two" to make the event look more as per Deut(17:6): one witness is not enough.

DAVID'S CHOICE

II Sam(24:13): Seven years of famine ... or will thou flee before thine enemies three months ...

I Chr(21:12): Either three years of famine or three months to be destroyed ...

EUCCHARIST CUPS ONE OR TWO

Mk(14:23) and Mt(26:27) record Jesus taking a cup and giving to his disciples saying "Drink ye all of it", for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

However, Lk(22) mentions two cups .. In V. 17 "he took the cup ... and said ... I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come" In V. 28 "likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you". Interestingly, four cups of wine were taken at Passover Supper.

HOW LONG?

Ex(12:40): Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

Col(3:17): The covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul.

COMMENT: The covenant was made with Abraham who lived much earlier than the period when the Israelites entered Egypt. Thus the period between Abraham's covenant with God and introduction of Mosaic law has to be much more than the period of sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt which itself is stated to be 430 years. Paul was, therefore, giving a wrong estimate. It is interesting that the period of 430 year of the sojourning of the children of Israel in Egypt is also not consistent with the original prophecy to Abraham: Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years(Gen 15:13). There are, however, grave doubts if the total period of sojourning of Israelites in Egypt was even 400 years. We shall not go into details but suffice it to say that the estimates range between 215 to 407 years whereas according to GNB: On the day the 430 years ended, all the tribes of the Lord's people left Egypt(Ex 12:40); NEB: four hundred and thirty years, on this very day. Thus, it is emphatic about EXACTLY 430 years which is not borne out by external record.

SHIPMATES

Acts(27:37): And we were in all in the ship two hundred three score and sixteen souls.

GNB(Footnote): 276; some manuscripts have 275; others have "about 76".

DOUBTFUL MEASURE

I Kg(5:11):

- KJV: And Solomon gave Hiram ... twenty measures of pure oil,
GNB: ... four hundred thousand litres of pure olive oil.(Footnote: Hebrew four thousand litres).
NIV: ... twenty thousand baths of pressed olive oil.(Footnote: Hebrew, twenty cors; That is about 11,5000 gallons, about 440 kilolitres).

II Chr(2:10):

- KJV: ... Twenty thousand baths of oil
GNB: ...four hundred thousand litres of olive oil
NIV: ... twenty thousand baths of olive oil.

WHICH MALES?

II Chr(10:2):

- KIV: Besides their genealogy of males, from three years of age and upward.
GNB: They gave a share to all males thirty years of age or older(Footnote: Probable text "thirty", Hebrew, "three").

CONFUSION GALORE

IEHOVAH MISUNDERSTOOD

The Jews revered the name of God so much that it was considered sacrilege to pronounce it. In their documents they merely transcribed the tetragram YHWH in order to avoid even writing it in full. Since it was never pronounced, no one today knows how it could have been pronounced. While reading the text the readers would skip it and instead read ADONAI and for this purpose initials A-o-i were written underneath the tetragram. The uninitiated Gentiles mistakenly combined these letters and the word became Ya Ho Wi H or, as mispronounced, Jehovah!.

WRONG BEGINNING

Gen(1:2): And the earth was without form and void ... and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

COMMENT: If the earth was without form and void, then where did the water come from?

ADAM, MAN OR WOMAN

Gen(5:2): Male and Female created he them and blessed them and called *their* name "Adam".

Gen(1:27): Male Female created he them.

Gen(2:18): And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.

Gen(2:7): ... and the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet of him.

Gen(2:21-22): And he took one of his ribs; ... and made he a woman.

Gen(2:23): "And Adam said ... she shall be called Woman".

Gen(3:20): "And Adam called his wife's name EVE".

JOSEPH'S CUP

Gen(44:5):

CNB: Why did you steal my master's cup? It is the one he drinks from, the one he uses for divination. You have committed a serious crime.

Footnote: One ancient translation: why did you steal my master's cup? Hebrew does not have these words.

NAB puts "why did you steal my master's cup" at the end rather than beginning of V.5. CUR, RBV and RSV put "why have you stolen my silver cup" at the end of V.5 KJV, NWT and TJB omit it altogether.

SON PAYS FOR FATHER'S MISDEED

Gen(9:21-25):(Noah) drank of the wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his brothers without ... And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him and he said Canaan he cursed.

1 Kg(21:19): Thus saith the Lord(to AHAB), in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

COMMENT: This was Elijah's prophecy against Ahab. However, Ahab relented and "put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, ... And the word of the Lord came unto Elijah the Tishbite saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house"(1 Kg 21:27-28). So Ahab's "house" had to pay for his sins!

Ex(34:7): Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon children of children and to the fourth generation.

Deut(23:2): A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord ... to his tenth generation.

LK(11:51): From the blood of Abel into the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple, verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

YET IT IS ALSO WRITTEN

Deut(24:16): The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

II Chr(25:4): The father shall not die for the children; neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

Eze(18:4): The soul that sinneth it shall die.

Eze(18:20): He who sows shall reap.

Iere(31:30): But every one shall die for his own iniquity, every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

CHILDREN SUFFER FOR THEIR FATHER'S MISDEED

II Kg(5:27): [Elisha cursed Gehazi, his servant, for his misdeed] The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence as white as snow.

PEOPLE SUFFER FOR DAVID'S MISDEED

II Sam(24:1,10,12,13,15): The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah ... And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done ... Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them ... shall seven years of famine come unto thee and thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies ... or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? ... So Lord sent pestilence upon Israel ... there died of the people ... seventy thousand men.

COMMENT: Seventy thousand people of Israel died because David was made to count the people of Israel and Judah by God himself. Surprisingly only people of Israel paid for David's "sin", people of Judah were not punished.

TONGUES TWISTED

Gen(10:5): Every one after his tongue.

Gen(11:1): And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.

WRONG CUSTOM

Gen(24:2-3,9): And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all he had, put, I pray thee; thy hand under my thigh and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

Gen(47:29): He [Joseph] called his son Joseph and said unto him, I know I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me.

COMMENT: There is no historical evidence of swearing/promising by "putting the hand under the thigh". This seems to be a misunderstanding of an ancient idiom.

BROTHER OR NEPHEW?

Gen(11:31): And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son.

Gen(12:5): And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son ..

Gen(14:12): And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son...

Gen(14:4): And when Abram heard that his brother(Lot) was staken captive ..

Gen(14:16): And he brought back all the goods and also brought again his brother Lot.

BROTHER OR UNCLE

II Ch.(36:10):

KJV: Nebuchadnezzar ... made ... Zedekioh his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

NWT: His father's brother

GNB, NIV, RBV: ... his uncle.

II Kg(24:17):

KJV: And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

TABLES TURNED

Gen(14:18-20):

KJV: And Melchizedec, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine ... and he gave him tithes of all.

COMMENT: Inspite of a different version of the same statement in the book of Hebrews for centuries the Christians kept reading the above version in KJV(Gen 14:18-20) which indicated as if Melehizedee had offered tithes to Abram. The meanings in "Hebrews" are quite opposite:

Heb(7:1-2,4): For this Melchizedec ... to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Modern translations now give the following version for Gen(14:18-20)

GNB: And gave Melchizedec ... tenth of all the loot he had recovered.

NAV, NIV, RSV, TJB, TLB: And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

WRONG TIME

Gen(Ch.21): All Midianites killed during the lifetime of Moses.

COMMENT: According to Judges(Ch. 6) Midianites were still there even a hundred years later.

Dan(9:26-27): And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off... the end thereof shall be with a flood ... and for the overspreading of abominations(GNB: The Awful Horror) he shall make it desolate.

GNB Footnote: The Awful Horrór, A pagan image set up in the Jerusalem Temple by foreign conquerors.

COMMENT: Cutting of the Messiah was to be followed by flood, which did not happen, and the Abomination i.e. actually happened several centuries before. As for the abomination that Jesus himself is said to have been talking about was not the profaning of the Temple but that of total destruction and the great persecution that followed.

COVENANT:

Gen(17:21): But my covenant will I establish with Isaac which Sarah shall bear unto thee!

COMMENT: The Jews consider themselves, as God's chosen people of the Covenant inspite of the fact that original promise to Abraham was for his "seed" at a time when Ishmael was his only son and Isaac had not yet been born(See Gen 17:2-4) which clearly says that "my covenant is with thee". Gen(17:7) also speaks of "Thee and thy seed and after thee in their generations".

THE "ONLY SON"

Gen(22:2,17): ... Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac.

FACT: Ishmael was older to Isaac and outlived Abraham; As such at no time was Isaac an 'only son'. Bible itself speaks of Ishmael as: Abrahm called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael(Gen 16:15).

Gen(20:13): The son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

Gen(17:7): I will establish my covenant with thee and thy seed after thee in their generations as everlasting covenant.

Gen(25:9): And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah.

IGNORANT PROPHET

Gen(37:11): When Joseph saw his dream he told it to his father and to his brothers and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is the dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

COMMENT: It is strange that Jacob being a prophet himself would not recognise the significance of a prophetic dream and rebuked Joseph while "His brethren envied him" because they must have understood what it meant.

WHO SOLD JOSEPH TO WHOM?

Gen(37:27): [Joseph's brothers said] Let us sell him to Ishmaelites.

Gen(37:28): (After Joseph's brothers cast him into a pit) there passed by Midianites merchantmen: and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit and sold Joseph to Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph to Egypt"

Gen(39:1): Joseph was brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites.

Gen(37:36): And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar an officer of pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

Acts(7:9): The patriarchs, moved with envy sold Joseph into Egypt.

SAUL'S GRANDFATHER

I Sam(9:1-2): Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Alphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power and he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice man and goodly.

I Chr(9:39): And Ner begat Kish and Kish begat Saul.

II Sam(17:25): Amasa was A man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahush, sister to Zuriah, Joab's mother.

I Chr(217): And Abigail bare Amasa and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite.

WRONG SONS

Gen(46:21): And the sons of Benjamin were Bela and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim and Ard.

I Chr.(7:6): Sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher, and Jedial, three.

I Chr.(8:1-2): Now Benjamin begat Bela his first born, Ashbel the second and Ahrah the third, Noah the fourth and Rafah the fifth.

DEAD WRONG

MT(8:21-22): And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

COMMENT: Can the dead act so as to bury other dead? Was Jesus so hard-hearted as to not allow the man to bury his father? What was the urgency? What were his actual words? Perhaps Jesus may have been using a common idiom.

GOD THE ANGEL

Zech(3:1-2)

(KJV): And he [the angel of the Lord] shewd me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. [Similar NWT, NAB, NAS, TJB]

GNB: In another vision the Lord showed me the High Priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord. And there beside Joshua stood Satan ready to bring an accusation against him. The angel of Lord said to Satan! May the Lord condemn you, Satan! [Footnote: One ancient translation: The angel of the Lord. Hebrew: The Lord]

TLB: Then the angel showed me(in my vision) Joshua the High Priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan was there too, at the Angel's right hand accusing Joshua of many things. And the Lord said to Satan, "I reject your accusations, Satan ... I rebuke you"[Similar NIV, NAS RBV]

WHOSE FOLLY?

Prov(26:4): Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

Prov(26:5): Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

GOOD THRESHING

II sam(25:24-25): And the king[David] said unto Arauna, Nay; but I will buy it of thee at a price ... so David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekel of silver. And David built there an altar.

I Chr(21:25-26): So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar.

WHICH TAX COLLECTOR?

MK(2:14): And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the redeipt of the custom.

MT(9:9): And as he passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.

COMMENT: Gospels differ about the name of one of the Twelve members of Jesus' inner circle of followers! Can we trust their testimony about what they record about Jesus' message?

Acts(5:34-37): Then stood thereup one in the council, a Pharisee, named Ga-mali-el, a doctor of law, ... and said to them ... For before these days rose up Theu-das, boasting himself to be somebody ... After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of taxing.

COMMENT: "The days of taxing" refer to the alleged time of Jesus' birth. According to the above statement Theudas must have lived before Jesus was born. However, according to Josephus Theudas rose around 44 C.E. i.e. many years after Jesus himself. Christian apologists have often argued that this may be a later interpolation in Josephus' book(Ronald A. Knox; New Testament Commentary, pp. 15). Yet the same

author himself admits that "In the text of the Acts there is a possibility that Luke translated(Gamaliel's speech) from an Aramaic text in which case the mistake is not of Luke but that of the original writer"(op. cit., pp 14). It seems that Luke was not divinely "inspired" while quoting Gamaliel.

WHO WAS MOSES' FATHER-IN-LAW?

Ex(2:16-18):

KJV: The priest of Midian had seven daughters ... and when they came to Reuel their father.

RSV, NWT, NIV, RBV: ... their father Reuel. GNB gives no name.

Ex(3:1):

KJV: Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.(Also the same in Ex(18:1,2).

TJB: his father-in-law Jethro.

BLESSED OR CURSED?

Deut(11:29): thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim and curse upon mount Ebal.

Deut(7:4): "Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and shall plaister them with plaister.

COMMENT: It is strange that the altar was to be built on the cursed mountain, mount Ebal, and not on the blessed mountain, mount Gerizim. This is the question the Samaritan woman posed Jesus: Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship(JN 4:19-20). The question posed by this simple Samaritan woman is of basic significance. The Samaritans worshipped on Mount Gerizim. Jesus did not tell her that the Samaritans were wrong and they should worship on Mount Ebal which seems to be the cursed mountain. He only pointed out to her that "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father"(JN 4:21).

THE UNRIGHTEOUS OR RIGHTEOUS?

Deut(22:22): If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

11 Sam(11:4): And David sent messengers and took her, and she came in unto him, and he lay with her(Bethsheba, wife of Uriah).

Acts(13:22): I have found David son of Jesse to be a man after my own heart, who will carry out all my purpose.

THE EUNUCH

Deut(23:1): He that is wounded in the stones or both his privy member cut off shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

Acts(8:27): A man of Ethiopia, an eunuch who had come to Jerusalem for to worship.

SPECIAL DISPENSATION

Gen(Ch. 38): Phares was born to Tamar through incest by her father-in-law Judah.

Deut(23:2): A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord: even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

MT(1:3-6) and Ruth(4:18-22): Phares begat Esrom ... begat Aram ... begat Aminadab ... begat Naason ... begat Salmon ... begat Boaz ... begat Obed ... begat Jesse ... begat David.

COMMENT: Phares to David are within ten generations!

THE UNCONQUERED

Josh(10:5, 17,23,26): Joshua kills the king of Jerusalem.

Josh(10:42): And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time. It was the custom of Joshua to kill every living man or animal in the cities he conquered.

Josh(15:63): As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Israel could not drive them out.

WRONG DIRECTION

Josh(18:14):

KJV: ... in front of the sea.

COMMENTS: For centuries the translation acceptable to the Christians was "in front of the sea". Whereas modern translations, e.g. GNB, NIV, NWT, RBV, RSV, tJB, translate "Westward/Western side."

ARK WITH THE PHILISTINES

1 Sam(7:2): And it came to pass while the Ark abode in Kirjath-Jearim that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

1 Sam(6:1): And the Ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

WRONG MAN?

Idg(17:7):

KJV/NWT/RSV: And there was a young man out of Bethlehem Judah of the family of Judah who was a Levite.

RBV: A Levite of the tribe of Judah from Bethlehem in Judah.

For centuries it was confusing to think of a Levite of the family of Judah until more modern translations clarified thus:

GNB: A young Levite who had been living in the town of Bethlehem in Judah.

NIV: A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah.

KNOPED OUT

1 Kg(7:24):

KJV: And under the brim of it round about there were knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about the knops were cast in two rows, when it was cast.

Instead of KNOPS other versions use the following words

GNB: Bronze gourds

NIV, TJB, RSV: Gourds
RBV: Rosebud decorations
NWT: Gourd-shaped ornaments

BEFORE OR AFTER?

II Sam(Ch. 5-6): David brought the Ark after the battle.

I Chr.(Ch. 13-14): David brought the Ark before the battle.

GOD OR SATAN?

II Sam(24:1): The anger of Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, go, number Israel and Judah.

I Chr(13:1-7): Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number people ... and God was displeased with this thing.

WRONG MOTHER?

I Kg(15:1-2): Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, reigned Abijam over Judah. Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

II Chr(13:1-2): Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeath.

II Sam(14:27): Abishalom had only one daughter named Tamar.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

I Cor(14:22): Tongues are for a sign: not to them that believe but to them that believe not.

I Cor(14:23): If the whole church become together into one place and all speak in tongues and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

GOING BACKWARDS

II Kg(20:11): Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

COMMENT: "It is difficult to say exactly what this means, but we can believe that God could perform a miracle and make one day longer than usual. II Chr(32:31) shows that it was a miracle which even the people in far away Babylon heard about it"(William MacDonald, Kingdom Divided). [What about the rest of the world?]. If the day changed then the whole world would experience it. Even Babylonians also seem to have only heard about it [Did they?] but not experienced.

MISSING PROPHECY

II Kg(14:25): According to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Ammittai the prophet.

COMMENT: No such prophecy is given anywhere in the Bible let alone in the Book of Jonah.

WRONG TIME

II Kg(Chapter 20):

"Most Bible students believe that the events of this chapter took place earlier"(William MacDonald: Kingdom Divided).

MISSING NAME

I Ch(8:20-32): And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon: whose wife's name was Maachah: and his first born son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab, and Gedor, and Ahio, and Zahore and Mikloth begat Shimeah.

I Chr(9:35-44): And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel whose wife's name was Maachah, and his first born son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal and Ner, and Nadab, and Geder, and Ahio, and Zachaariah, and Mikloth. And Mikloth begat Shimeam ... and Ner begat Kish.

COMMENT: In the same book in one chapter Ner is included while in another chapter this name does not occur. Which Kish did he sire?

WHO IS RIGHT?

II Chr(4:3):

KJV:	Oxen
GNB:	Bulls
RSV, NWT:	Gourds

WRONG KING

II Chr(28:16):

KJV: At that time did Ahaz send unto the Kings of Assyria to help him.

NIV: "King" Footnote: One Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint and Vulgate(see also II Kg 16:7): most Hebrew manuscripts 'King'.

II Ch.(28:19): For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord.

FACT: Ahaz was king of Judah, Not Israel! [NIV footnote to the above verse: "That is Judah, as frequently in II Chr"].

EARTH DRY/NOT DRY

Gen(8:6-7): At the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and from until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

Gen(8:8): And he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot ... for the waters were on the face of the whole earth.

COMMENTS: The second statement contradicts the first one. It seems that ancient compilers combined two different versions, one where the raven went out and found the earth dry and the second where the dove went out to find the waters still raging over the face of the whole earth.

NO HOLY GHOST!

1 In(1:3): Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Acts(19:2): We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

POOR JOSEPH

Gen(48:8-9): When Israel [Jacob] saw the sons of Joseph, he said, who are these?

COMMENT: This happened seven years after Jacob and his entourage settled in Egypt. It is strange that during all those years Jacob had not met Joseph's children. Even on his death-bed, he should have known Joseph's sons by their voice let alone not recognizing them even after seeing.

AN EVIL CHILD

11 Chr(36:9): Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord(KJV).

NWT, GNB ... Jehoiachin was eighteen years old.

11 Kg(24:8):

KJV: Jehoiachin was eighteen year old when he began to reign.

CONFUSING TRANSLATION

Ps(105:28):

KJV: ... and they rebelled not against him.

GNB, NWT, RBV: ... did not rebel, obeyed.

NIV, RSV, TJB: ... rebelled/defied ...

COMMENT: The confusion is because of differences in Hebrew and Greek versions. No one seems to be sure of the correct version.

STARVED OR ATE

MK(Ch.1): John ate honey and locust

MT(Ch. 2): Did not eat or drink.

WHERE?

MK(1:912): Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in Jordan ... and immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

IN(1:28): These things were done in Bethab-a-ra beyond Jordan where John was baptizing.

COMMENT: In the Gospel of St. John there is no mention of Jesus being baptized by John, nor of going "straight away out of water" nor of Jesus having spent forty days in fasting in the woods and being tempted by the devil. In fact Jesus seems to have stayed with John for two days and then went toward Galilee with two disciples.

BEFORE OR AFTER?

MK(1:14): Now after John was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

MT(3:22-24): After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized ... For John was not yet cast into prison.

MK(1:29-45), LK(4:38), LK(5:12): Jesus came to Capernaum and stayed in Simon Peter's house, Later he healed the leper.

MT((:1-5): Jesus healed the leper before he came to Capernaum.

WHICH NATIONALITY?

MK(7:26): the woman was a Greek, a syrophenician by nation ...

MT(15:22): A woman of Canaan ...

SAMARITANS: GOOD OR BAD?

LK(9:53): They received him not because his face was as though he was going to Jerusalem.

IN(4:10): He abode there two days.[Not with "unclean" Samaritans!]

GENTILES: CLEAN OR UNCLEAN?

Acts(10:28): "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

KILLING FIELD

MK(12:8): and they took him, and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.

MT(21:39): And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

COMMENT: Was the man first killed and then thrown out or first thrown out and then killed?

MISDIRECTED

MK(8:10): He entered into a ship ... and into the part of Dalmanutha.

MT(15:39): He sent away the multitudes, and took ship, and came into the coast of Magdala.

THE CHOSEN ONES

LK(6:13): He called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.

IN(15:16): Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.

COMMENT: What a fruit did Judah Iscariot bring forth [or did he?], and all others forsook him!

WHO DID WHAT?

MK(15:32): And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

MT(27:44): The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

LK(23:39-40): And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him ... But the other answering rebuked him.

TRUE OR FALSE?

MK(16:57-58): And there rose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying we heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and I will build another made without hands.

IN(2:19-21): Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up ... but he spake of the temple of his body.

PETER, PETER

MT(16:17-18): Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona ... thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.

MT(16:23): ... and said to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

MISTRANSLATED

MT(23:26): Blind pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

LK(11:41): give what is inside the dish to the poor and everything will be clean for you.

COMMENT: The original word was DAKKAU(to clean) which was misunderstood as Zakkau(to give alms) by Luke.

JEWISH EASTER

Acts(12:4,KJV): Herod put Peter in prison "intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people".

COMMENT: Easter became a festival a couple of centuries later after paganization of "Christianity". Jews celebrated Passover.

LEFT OR RIGHT?

MK(10:35-37): And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us what soever we shall desire ... Grant unto us that we may sit, one on the right hand, and the other on the left hand, in thy glory.

MT(20:20-21): Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshiping him, and desiring a certain thing of him ... Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

WAS SHE OR WASN'T SHE?

MT(1:24):

GNB: So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to do.

NIV, NEB: ... He took Mary home to be his wife.

KJV, RBV: ... He took unto him his wife.

NWT, RSV, TJB: ... He took his wife to his home.

COMMENT: According to GNB, NIV, and NEB Mary was not yet Joseph's wife. KJB, RBV, NWT, RSV and TJB imply that Mary was already Joseph's wife!

LK(2:5):

GNB: He went to register Mary who was promised in marriage to him.

NEB: who was betrothed to him

KJV: His espoused wife.

NIV: who was pledged to be married to him.

RBV: his betrothed

TJB, RSV: his betrothed

NWT: who had been given to him in marriage as promised.

COMMENT: NWT gives the impression that Mary had already been "given to him in marriage" while other translations imply that they were not yet married. If the latter was the case then being not yet married it was not necessary, or even allowed by custom, for Mary to accompany Joseph on the long trip in winter from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

TO WHOM DID THE ANGEL COME?

MT(1:20): An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

LK(1:26-27): the angel Gabriel was sent from God....to a virgin....and the virgin's name was Mary.

LIGHT AND SOUND

Acts(9:2-8): Suddenly there shined about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him ... and the men which journeyed with him: stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth: and when his eyes were opened ...

Acts(22:9-11): They that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid: but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me ... And when I could not see for the glory of that light being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus.

COMMENT: It is said that while Paul's eyes were dazzled so much that he lost his sight, his companions remained untouched even though they did see the same light. Luke, however, contradicts this. In any case, whatever happened to Paul was experienced by him in a state of shock and fear. Could he be trusted for that?

TO SIN OR NOT TO SIN, THAT'S IS THE CONFUSION

Eze(20:8): The soul that sinneth, it shall die

IN(15:22): If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin.

Rom(1:18): We see divine retribution revealed from Heaven and falling upon all the godless wickedness of men.

Rom(2:12): For as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.

Rom(3:20): Law brings only consciousness of sin.

Rom(5:15): Death held sway from Adam to Moses even over those who had not sinned as Adam did.

Rom(8:32): He that spared not his own son.

Rom(7:12): The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Rom(7:6): We are discharged from the law.

- Rom(10:4): Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
- Rom(3:13): Does this mean that we are using faith to undermine law? By no means, we are placing the law on firmer footing.
- Eph(2:15): He annulled the law with its rules and regulations.
- Col(2:14-15): He has cancelled the bond which pledged us to the curse of the law. It stood against us, but he has set it aside, nailing it to the cross.
- 1 Cor(7:19): Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God.
- Gal(5:2): If you receive circumcision Christ will do you no good at all.
- Col(2:16): Allow no one therefore to take you to task about you eat or drink.
- Rom(14:14): I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.
- 1 Cor(8:7): there are some who have been accustomed to idolatry that even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration, and their conscience, being weak, is polluted by its eating.
- 1 Cor(10:25): Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.
- Rom(3:25): God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death.
- Rom(5:15): God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrong doing.
- 1as(2:20, 24): Faith without works is death ... by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

WHICH CHURCH?

MT(18:15,17): If thy brother shall trespass against the tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

COMMENTS: These words are clearly imputed. It was not Jesus' figure of speech to call people as "heathens and publicans". He claimed to have come to call such people to repentance and to be their friends.

GARBLED TEXT

Gen(4:8)

GNB: Then Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out in the fields", when they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him.(FOOTNOTE: Let's go out in the fields, HEBREW does not have these words).

Gen(10:14)

KJV: And Path-rusim, and Casluhim(out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim.

GNB: Pathrus, Casluh, and of Caphtor, from whom the Philistines are descended.(FOOTNOTE: Probable text and of Caphtor ... descended; HEBREW, from whom Philistines are descended, and Caphtor).

Gen(15:2)

GNB:... My only heir is Eliezer of Damascus.

FOOTNOTE: HEBREW unclear.

Gen(16:13): ... Have I really seen God and lived to tell about it?

FOOTNOTE: HEBREW unclear.

Gen(21:9)

GNB: One day Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, was playing with Sarah's son Isaac.

FOOTNOTE: Some ancient translations "with Sarah's son Isaac; HEBREW does not have these words.

Gen(30:32)

GNB: Let me go through all your flocks today and take every black lamb.

FOOTNOTE: One ancient translation "every black lamb"; HEBREW, "every spotted and speckled lamb, and every black lamb".

Gen(36:2,14):

GNB FOOTNOTE: Some ancient translations "son"; HEBREW, daughter, or grand daughter.

Gen(44:5)

GNB: why did you steal my master's silver cup?

FOOTNOTE: HEBREW does not have it.

Gen(49:10)

GNB: Nations will bring him tribute

FOOTNOTE: HEBREW unclear.

Lev(16:8)

GNB FOOTNOTE: AZAZEL, the meaning of this Hebrew word is unknown, it may be the name of a desert demon.

Lev(21:4)

GNB FOOTNOTE: Verse 4 in Hebrew is not clear.

Num(21:30)

GNB FOOTNOTE: Verse 30 in Hebrew is not clear.

Num(22:32)

GNB FOOTNOTE: Hebrew unclear.

Deut(18:8)

GNB: FOOTNOTE: Hebrew unclear.

Deut(6:4)

GNB: "Israel, remember this! The Lord — and the Lord alone — is our God.

FOOTNOTE: The Lord ... is our God; or the Lord, our God, is the only God; or The Lord our God is one.

COMMENT: Sometimes it is argued that nothing substantial or of importance is missing or misinterpreted. Here is an example of the most important Commandment which cannot be faithfully conveyed.

Deut(33:7)

GNB: Fight for them Lord and help them against their enemies.

Footnote: Probable Text "Fight for ... enemies." HEBREW, "The Tribe of Judah will fight for itself, and the Lord will help it against its enemies.

Josh(8:17)

GNB: Every man in Ai went after the Israelites.

Footnote: One ancient translation "Ai"; HEBREW "Ai and Bethel".

Iosh(12:23)

GNB:.... in Galilee

FOOTNOTE: HEBREW Gilgal.

I Sam(13:1)

KJV: Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel.

GNB: does not have this verse.

FOOTNOTE: One ancient translation does not have verse 1; Hebrew has as verse 1 "Saul was . years old when he came king, and he was king of Israel for two years", The Hebrew text is defective at two points in this verse.

I Sam(25:21-22)

KJV: Now David had said, surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. So more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I have of all that pertain to him by morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

GNB: David had been thinking, "Why did I ever protect that fellow's property out here in the wilderness? Not a thing that belonged to him was stolen, and this is how he pays me back for the help I gave him! May God strike me dead if I don't kill every last one of those men before morning!" FOOTNOTE: One ancient translation "me;" Hebrew "my enemies".

RSV: Now David had said ... God do so to David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male ... FOOTNOTE: GK COMPARE Syr; Hebrew "the enemies of David".

NIV: David had just said ... May God deal with David be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male ... Footnote: "David", some Septuagint manuscripts; HEBREW, "with David's enemies".

COMMENT: Note David had said, David had just said, David was thinking, etc.

II Sam(3:6)

GNB: The woman at the door had become drowsy while she was sifting wheat and had fallen asleep, so Rechab and Baanah slipped in.

FOOTNOTE: Verse 6 follows one ancient translation, HEBREW, "They went on into the house carrying wheat and struck him in the belly. Then Rechab and his brother Baanah escaped.

I Kg(2:29)

GNB: Solomon sent a messenger to Jaob to ask him ... So king Solomon sent Benaiah to kill Jaob.

FOOTNOTE: One ancient translation "Solomon sent a messenger" HEBREW; Solomon sent Benaiah.

I Kg(12:2)

KJV: When Jeroboam ... heard of it ... [he] dwelt in Egypt.

GNB: When Jeroboam ... heard the news ... he returned from Egypt.

II Chr(10:2)

KJV: When Jeroboam ... heard it ... [he] returned out of Egypt.

NIV: When Jeroboam ... heard the news ... he returned home.

Chr(34:20)

KJV: ... Abdon the son of Micah ...

GNB: ... Abdon son of Micaiah ...

FOOTNOTE: Achbor in 11 Kg 22:12.

11 Kg (22:12)(KJV): Achbor the son of Mi-Chai'-ah

Esth(1:8):

GNB: There were no limits on the drinks; the king had given orders to the palace servants that everyone could have as much as he wanted.(FOOTNOTE: or, But no one was forced to drink; the king had given orders to the palace servants that everyone could have as much or as little as he wanted.

Job(1:1) there was a man in the land of Uz-

GNB FOOTNOTE: Uz, An area whose exact location is unknown.

Job(3:8):

KJV: Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning.

GNB: Tell the sorcerers to curse that day, those who know how to control leviathan.

FOOTNOTE: leviathan, some take it to be the crocodile, others a legendary monster.

Magicians were thought to be able to make him cause eclipse of the sun.

COMMENT: "Holy Scripture" relying on myths!

Job(6:7)(GNB): You are like these streams to me.

FOOTNOTE: Some ancient translations and one Hebrew manuscript "to me"; most Hebrew manuscripts have two different expressions, "nothing" in the text and "to him" in the margin.

Ps(22:21)(GNB): Rescue me from the lions; I am helpless before these wild bulls.

FOOTNOTE: Some Ancient translations, "I am helpless"; HEBREW, "you answered me").

ABOUT TURN

Ps(105:28)(GNB): Egyptians did not obey his command.

FOOTNOTE: Hebrew, obeyed.

MISDIRECTION

Ps(107:3)(GNB): ... south ...

FOOTNOTE: Probable text "south"; HEBREW, the Mediterranean Sea(meaning "West").

PALATIAL PRISON

Iere(38:28)

KJV: So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken.

GNB: And I was kept in the palace courtyard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

MOVING TEXT

Iere(39:3): According to GNB(FOOTNOTE) had been "moved from the end of Chapter 38.

UNKNOWN YEAR

Eze(1:1): "In the thirtieth year ..."

GNB FOOTNOTE: It is not known to what year this refers.

GOD OR EVIL

Hos(4:15)

KJB: ... Beth - a'ven ...

GNB:... Beth-el(FOOTNOTE: This name in Hebrew means "house of God". The Hebrew text here refers to Bethel as Bethaven, "house of evil" or "house of idolatry"). [Beth-el means house of God].

OLD TESTAMENT is full of ambiguous text. Footnotes in GNB, RSV, NIV, etc., show literally hundreds of remarks such as: Probable text, Hebrew unclear, Hebrew does not have these words, some ancient translations have it, some ancient manuscripts do not have it, etc. There is hardly a page which does not have such remarks, many a times more than one. For fear of over-extending complete list is not being given here.

WHAT HAPPENED AT JERICHO?

MK(10:46): And they came to Jericho; and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people.

COMMENT: Something is ominously missing.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

MK(12:9): What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard to the others.

MT(21:40-41): (Jesus asked) When the owner of the vineyard comes, how do you think he will deal with those tenants? He will bring those bad men to a bad end, *they answered*.

LK(20:15-16): What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and put these tenants to death and let the vineyard to others.

COMMENT: Matthew says that the audience gave the answer. But Mark and Luke say that Jesus himself answered his own question.

BEELZEBUB

MT(10:25): It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Be-elze-bub, how much more shall they call them of his household. [Also see MK(3:22), MT(12:24), LK(11:15)].

LK(6:40): The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be his master.

JN(13:16): Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent is greater than he that sent him.

JN(15:20): The servant is not greater than his lord ...

COMMENT: Note the variation in the conveying of the same message. As for "Be-elze-bub" GNB, NAB, NAS, RBV and RSV record it as Beelzebul. It is surprising that Christian writers try to translate even proper names. As such TLB translates Beelzebub/Beelzebul as "Satan" while MET translates it as "Prince of Evil". In fact there is no historical explanation for this word which does not occur in Old Testament. Furthermore, what is translated as servant is actually "slave".

WITHERING OF THE FIG TREE

MT(21:19): And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the tree withered away.

MK(11:13-14): And seeing a fig tree a-far off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves: *for the time of figs was not yet*. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

LK(13:6-7): He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none: Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

MK(11:20): And in the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

COMMENT: A typical case of myth-building! Luke says it was only a parable. Mark says that the withering of the tree was noticed later. Matthew records that the tree withered "presently". Incidentally, the fig tree seems to represent the Jewish nation, who had to wither for not heeding to Jesus' foreboding.

HOW OLD?

LK(2:36-37): ... She was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years.

GNB(Footnote): "was eighty four years of age: or had been a widow eighty-four years.

DID PAUL PREACH "RESURRECTION"?

Acts(17:18): then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him [Paul]. And some said, what will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

GNB(Footnote): Jesus and the resurrection — In Greek, the feminine noun "resurrection" could be understood to be the name of a [certain] goddess.

STRANGE BED-FELLOW

Rom(16:7): Greetings also to Andronicus and Junias, fellow-Jew who were in prison with me.

GNB(Footnote): Junias; or June; some manuscripts have Julia.

WHICH TOWN?

LK(28:6): Jesus and his disciples sailed on over to the territory of Gerasa(KJV)

MT(8:28): ... Gadarenes ... (KJV)

Version	MT(8:28)	LK(8:26)
NEB	Gadarenes	Gergesenes
GNB	Gadara	Gerasa(See Footnote)
(Footnote: Some manuscripts have Gedora, others have Gergesa).		
TJB/RSV/NAS/NWT	Gadarenes	Gerasenes
NAB	Gadarene	Gerasene

COMMENT: If the Gospels are not sure about the name of a territory, can they be relied upon for spoken words? If the translators are unsure even about names, can they appropriately translate from ancient languages having their own cultural and historical environment?

MIRACULOUS POOL

IN(5:2): Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

GNB(Footnote): "Near the Sheep Gate ... a pool" or "Near the Sheep pool ... a place.

GNB(IN 5:2): Bethzatha ... [not Bethesda].

IN(5:3-4): In these lay a great multitude of important folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. for an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had.

Some modern translations omit: "waiting for the moving of water ... whatever disease he had". In any case such an admission would mean that miracles could happen even in Jesus' own times without intercession by Jesus.

HOW OLD?

IN(8:57): Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and has thou seen Abraham?

GNB(Footnote): "you have seen Abraham?; some manuscripts have "has Abraham seen you?".

INDIVISIBLE

1 Cor(1:13): Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

GNB: Christ has been divided into groups --

(Footnote): Christ has been divided; some manuscripts have "Christ cannot be divided".

HELL BOUND

Rev(1:18): ... I have authority over the dead and the world of the dead.

GNB(Footnote): WORLD OF THE DEAD: It was thought that the dead continued to exist in a dark world under the ground.

Rev(5:3): But there is no one in heaven, or on earth, or in the world below ...

Rev(6:8): Hades. (GNB Footnote: The world of the dead)

COMMENT: It is interesting that according to Christian thought when Jesus lay buried in "the belly of the earth for three days and three nights" he was actually living in the "Hell".

Also, GNB(Footnote): ABYSS: The place in the depths of the earth where the demons were imprisoned until their final punishment(Rev 9:1,2).

CONTRADICTIONS

GRAVEN IMAGES

Ex(20:4), Deut(5:8): Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Isa(44:9-10,17): They that make graven images are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witness; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down into it, and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

Ex(25:17-22): And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one Cherub on the one end; even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shall put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shall put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark. of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Ex(34:17): Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

Deut(27:15): Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord.

COMMENT: Did the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant have molten images of cherubim(angels)?

ARK RETURNS

I Sam(7:2): And it came to pass while the Ark abode in Kirjath-jearim that the time was long; for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

II Sam(6:1): And the Ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

GOD SEEN OR UNSEEN?

Deut(4:12): And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude.

Deut(5:15): Ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto ye in Horeb out of the midst of fire.

Ex(33:11): The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

Num(12:5): And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle.

Rev(4:2-3, 10-11): And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and sardine

stone ... And four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne ... saying Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory and honour and power ...

Ex(33:20): Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

Ex(24:9-11): Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel. And *they saw the God of Israel*: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: and *they saw God*, and did eat and drink.

1Tim(6:16): Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.

1Jn(4:12): No man hath seen God at any time.

Gen(Ch. 18): "God" comes and speaks to Abraham in the shape of a man(three men?, two angels?).

Gen(32:30): I have seen God face to face

Idg(13:22): We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

Isa(6:1-5): I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple ... mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of the hosts.

COMMENT: while "God" (can or) cannot be seen, God the Son was "incarnated" into human form and God the Holy Ghost appeared as a dove!

Gen(32:24): Jacob wrestled with God and defeated him.

FAVOURITISM

Rom(2:11): God has no favourites

Prov(11:31), 1Pet(3:10): The Lord resists the proud, but shows favour to the humble.

WRONG FATHER

II Chr(24:20): Zacharias son of Jehoida

Isa(8:2): " Jeberuchia

MT(23:35): " Barachias

WHO KILLED KING SAUL?

I Sam(31:4-6): Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it — So Saul died.

II Sam(1:10): (The Amalakite to King David:) I stood upon him, and slew him.

WRONG DIRECTION

MT(2:15-16): When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. And was there until the death of Herod.

LK(2:39): And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city(Nazareth).

WILDERNESS BOUND

MT(3:16-4:1): And Jesus when he was baptized went up straight way out of water ... Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

LK(3:21,4:1): Jesus also being baptized ... And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the spirit into the wilderness.
JN(Ch.1): Jesus did not go into wilderness.

PEACE OR DESTRUCTION?

MT(5:9): Blessed are the peace makers.

LK(2:14): On earth peace, goodwill toward men.

MT(26:52): All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

MT(10:34): Think not that I have come to bring peace on earth: I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

LK(12:49): I am come to send fire on earth: and will I, if it be already kindled?

LK(19:27): But as for those enemies of mine who did not want me for their king, bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.

LK(22:36): (Jesus told his disciples) he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

HOLY SCRIPTURES

1 Tim(1:4-7): Erroneous doctrines, interminable myths and genealogies ... mere speculation ... wilderness of words ... dogmatic ...

II Tim(3:15-16): Sacred writings ... every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error.

Tit(1:14): Jewish myths and commandments of merely human origin.

Tit(3:9): Steer clear of foolish speculations, genealogies, quarrels, and controversies over the law: they are unprofitable and pointless.

POWER GAME

MT(28:18): All power is given to me.

JN(5:19-20): Verily, verily, I say unto you, the son can do nothing of himself.

HATE THY FAMILY

JN(2:4): (Jesus said to his mother) Woman, what have I to do with thee?

MT(12:48): (Jesus said) Who is my mother and who are my brethren?

LK(14:26): If anyman come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own wife also, he cannot be my disciple.

COMMENT: No Wonder "all the disciples forsook him and fled"(MT 26:56).

HEAD OR FEET

MK(14:3), MT(26:7): Jesus' head was annointed

LK(7:37), JN(12:3): His feet were annointed.

IUDAS ISCARIOT

MT(27:3,5): When Judas the traitor saw that Jesus had been condemned, he was seized with remorse ... and went and hanged himself.

Acts(1:18): Now this man [Judas] purchased a field with the reward of iniquity: and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels came out.

THE ALLUDING GHOST

LK(1:15): And he(John the Baptist) shall be filled with the Holy ghost, even from his mother's womb.

LK(1:41): And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

IN(7:39): But this spoke he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.

SELF CONTRADICTIONARY

IN(112:25): If a man has faith in me even if he die, he shall come to life; and no one who is alive and has faith shall ever die.

COMMENT: Since the faithful shall never die, their coming back to life is not required, since all die, there are no faithful anyway.

CONFUSED GENERATIONS

LK(3:35-36): ... which was the son of Sala which was the son of Cainan which was the son of Arphaxad.

Gen(11:12): ... and Arphaxad begat Sala.

LK(3:36): ... Sala which was the son of Cainan which was the son of Ar-phaxad which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe which was the son of Lamech.

Gen(5:28-29): And Lamech ... begat a son: and he called his name Noah.

Gen(9:18): And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the Ark, were Shem, and Ham and Japheth, and Ham is the father of Canaan.

Gen(11:10): These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood.

Gen(11:12): Arphaxad lived five and thirty year and begat Salah.

COMMENT: Salah was not the son of Cainan but of Arphaxad who is shown as the grandfather by Luke. Canan was not the son of Salah or Arphaxad, but of Ham.

PRAYFUL CONFUSION

LK(9:18):

KJV: And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him.

NWT: Later while he was praying alone the disciples came together to him.

NEB: One day he was praying alone in the presence of his disciples.

NIV: Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him.

CNB: One day when Jesus was praying alone, the disciples came to him.

RBV: When he was praying by himself the disciples joined him.

MT(6:6): But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret;

LK(8:17): Nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest.

WITH OR WITHOUT

LK(9:50): And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

LK(11:23): He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

HIT OR MISS?

MT(5:39): Resist not evil: but whosoever smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

LK(19:27): But as for those enemies of mine who did not want me for their king, bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.

THIS DAY OR THAT

LK(21:8): Take care that you are not misled. For many will come claiming my name and saying, "I am he", and, "The Day is upon us". Do not follow them.

Rom(3:11-12): Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is spent the day is at hand.

1 Thess(5:2): The Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night.

Jas(5:8): The coming of the Lord is near.

FALSE SECURITY

LK(12:16): Some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

Isa(10:22), Rom(9:17): Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.

LK(21:18): But these shall not one hair of your head perish.

Rom(11:26): All Israel shall be saved.

PASSOVER BLUES

LK(22:7-15): then came the day of unleavened bread when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat ... And they went, and found as he had said to them, and they made ready the passover, and when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat the passover with you before I suffer.

IN(19:14-15): And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hours: and he saith unto the Jews. Behold your king.

FALSE WITNESS?

IN(5:31): My testimony is not true.

IN(8:14): My testimony is true.

THAT PROPHET

Acts(3:22):(KJV, NWT, RBV, RSV) A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me.

GNB, NIV: the Lord God will send you a prophet, just as he sent me, and he will be one of your own people.

TJB: ... From among yourself, from your own brothers.

Deut(18:15):NIV, KIV, NWT, RBV, TJB: ... from among your own brothers.

COMMENT: It is interesting that if it was to be from "among your brothers" then the special prophet could also come out of the generations of Ishmael as well as out of the Edomites. Many prophets had already come out of Israel and Jesus could qualify as only one of those prophets, not as "a prophet". Luke, however, gives a misleading idea through "your own people" trying to restrict this "prophet" to Israeli tribes only.

FAMISHED GRAINRY

Acts(7:11): The famine struck Egypt and Canaan and caused great hardship.

Acts(7:12): Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt.

CLEAN GENTILES

Acts(13:42):(KJV) And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

NEB: And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, they were asked to come again and speak on these subjects next Sabbath: and after the congregation had dispersed, many Jews and Gentile worshippers went along with Paul and Barnabas ...

Deut(23:3): An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever.

COMMENT: How come (unclean) Gentiles were worshiping in the Synagogue? Sometimes it is argued that synagogues were meeting places, or rather community halls, where Gentile could also enter. This may be so but rather unusual. However, "worshiping" is another matter.

A MATTER OF SPEECH

Ex(6:30): And Moses said before the Lord, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips(GNB: poor speaker) and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?

Acts(7:22): And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

LOST SHEEP

Acts(20:28):

KJV: "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood".

NIV, RSV, TJB, RBV also translate similarly.

NEB: "Shepherds to the church of the Lord which he won for himself by his own blood".

NIV(Footnote): many manuscripts "of the Lord".

GNB: "Be shepherds to the church of God which he made his own through the death of his son.

NWT: To shepherd the congregation of God which he purchased with the blood of his own(son).

DEADLY GAME

Acts(26:23): That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead.

I Cor(15:20-23): But now is Christ risen from the dead, and became the firstfruits of them that slept ... Christ the firstfruit.

Col(1:18): Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.

COMMENT: Yet, Jesus is said to have raised to life the Centurion's daughter, the widow's son as well as Lazarus. Also, many saints are reported to have come out of their graves at the time of Jesus' crucifixion!(MT 27:52). It is also stated that the one that goes in grave does not come back(Job 7:9-10, 14:13-14).

JOHN MARK WHO?

Col(4:10):

KJV: Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas.

NIV: Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.

GNB, NEB, NWT, RBV also translate it as "cousin."

HOLY SCRIPTURES

I Pet(1:23):

KJV: "By the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever".

GNB: "living and enduring word of God(Footnote: or "through the word of living and enduring God")).

FEAR OR LOVE?

Eph(5:21):

KJV: Submitting yourselves one to another in fear of God.

NEB: Out of reverence for Christ

TJB: RSV, GNB, NTV, RBV, NWT also translate "for Christ".

NO SALVATION

MK(2:17): I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

MT(1:14-15): Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospels of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Rom(11:29): Gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

ROB PETER TO PAY PAUL

II Thess(3:8,10): Neither did we eat anyman's bread for nought: but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you ... if any would not work, neither should he eat.

II Cor(11:8-9): I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man, for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied.

FANTASTIC PROMISE

MK(16:17): And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

COMMENT: No wonder "only a remnant shall be saved"(Isa 10:22, Rom 9:27). It is now universally recognized that part of Mark's Gospel after Chapter 15 had been lost and not available when it was included in the Canon adopted by the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. Chapter 16 is apparently an effort in trying to give it a complete look and represents pious thoughts and hope of the saint who quietly interpolated. We do not know if he had received divine inspiration to do so or whether this represents his human contribution to the Word of God.

SINLESS RANSOM

Prov(21:18): The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

COMMENT: Yet Jesus, the sinless one was crucified "for the sin of the mankind!"

GOOD OR BAD?

Gen(1:14,10,13,18,21): In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ... and God saw the light, that it was good ... it was good ... it was good ... it was good ... An God created whales and every creature that moveth ... and God saw that it was good.

Job(15:15): The heavens are not clean in his sight.

Job(25:5): The stars are not pure in his sight.

FATHER AND SON

Zech(1:1) KIV: In the eight month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Ber-e-Chiah, the son of Iddo the prophet. [Also NIV, NWT, NAB, NAS]

TJB: Zecharia(son of Berechia), son of Iddo ...

TLB, GNB: Zecharia(son of Berechia, and grandson of Iddo the prophet).

Ez(5:1): Zecharia the son of Iddo

Neh(12:16): of Iddo, Zechariah

NO QUESTIONS ASKED?

MT(22:46): Neither durst anyman from that day forth ask him any more questions.

MT(26:22): and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord is it I?

MK(14:61): Again, the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

LK(23:3): And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?

IN(12:23): And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

PRIESTHOOD OR NOT?

Heb(7:12): for the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of law.

Heb(7:13): For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

LAWLESSNESS

Rom(3:20): Law brings consciousness of sin

Rom(10:4): Christ ends the law and brings righteousness.

Heb(7:18): Earlier rules are cancelled as impotent

LK(10:25-28): ... Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life .. He said unto him, What is written in the law? ... this do and thou shalt live.

Deut(27:26): Cursed be he who does not confirm the law.

SNEAK PREACH

MT(28:19): Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them...

1 Cor(1:17): For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

Rom(15:20): I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

PROFITLESS WORKS

Rom(2:5-6): Righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his deeds.

Eph(2:8-9): For by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.

USELESS REPENTANCE

MK(1:4), LK (3:3): John did... preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

MK(1:5): (Jesus:) Repent ye, and believe the gospel [Also MT(3:2)].

MT(4:17): From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Rom(11:29): the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

DUBIOUS JUDGMENT

MT(7:1-2): (Jesus:) Judge not others, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.

IN (5:30): (Jesus:) As I hear I judge: and my judgment is just.

IN(7:24): Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Rom(2:1): (Paul:) O Man whoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same thing.

Jas(4:11-12): (James:) He that speaketh evil of his brother and judges his brother speaketh evil of the law. If thou judge the law thou art not a doer of law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. who art thou that judgeth another?

1 Cor(5:3-4): (Paul:) For verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord.

INTERPOLATIONS

MISINTERPRETED

Gen(9:24-25): And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan.

COMMENT: Thus, while the misdeed was by Ham, curse was pronounced on his son Canaan. Faced with the embarrassing text some Christian theologists alter the text thus: "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his [Ham's] younger son [Canaan] had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan"(Herbert W. Armstrong: Were the Ten Commandments In Force Before Moses?, Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, CA, U.S.A., 1956).

This is a blatant corruption of the "Inspired Word of God". No major translation/version of the Bible provides such a twist. This is a manifest example of how people have dared to interpolate the words in these parenthesis which entirely change the words or even the spirit of the text.

DELIBERATE?

MK(1:1-2)

KJV: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in the prophets.

GNB: This is the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it began as the prophet Isaiah had written.

Similar translations are given by MET, NAB, NEB, NIV, NWT, RBV, RSV, TJB and URD versions:

TLB: Here begins the wonderful story of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. In the book written by the prophet Isaiah ...

MET: Beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. According as it has been written in Isaiah the prophet.

COMMENT: Whereas KJV misses the name of Isaiah all the version except MET interpolate "Son of God" which is not included in more reliable and ancient manuscripts as also in Isaiah itself. GNB, NIV, RSV, acknowledge in their footnotes that some other manuscripts do not have "Son of God". Most of the versions try to give the impression as if the story of Jesus had been foretold in the book of Isaiah.

LORD OF SABBATH

MT(12:8):

KJV: Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath day. [The word "even" is an interpolation or a mistranslation. Other translations record it thus].

GNB/NIV/RSV: Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath.

NEB: Son of man is sovereign over the sabbath.

NWT: Lord of the sabbath is what the son of man is.

TJB: Son of Man is master of the sabbath.

FORGIVE OR NOT TO FORGIVE

MT(18:15-17): "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will

not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it into the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and publican.

COMMENT: This is not the usual teaching of Jesus but smacks of Paul's teaching. In fact there was no "church" which Jesus would be referring to. Also Jesus was not used to talking of and looking down on "heathen man and publican". Jesus' own teachings are better reflected in LK(17:3-4) "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him: and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying I repent: thou shalt forgive him". Also, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to the brother; and then come and offer thy gift"(MT 5:23-24).

Acts(8:37):

KJV: He lodgeth with one Simon a Tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

COMMENTS: The latter part is in later interpolation and omitted in modern translations.

Acts(15:34):

KJV: Not withstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

COMMENTS: It is now accepted to be a later interpolation.

Rev(1:11): Saying I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thy-a-Tira, and unto Sardis and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

COMMENTS: Modern translation omit "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last", as being interpolations.

LK(7:31): And the Lord said, where unto then shall I liken the man of this generation and to what are they like.

COMMENTS: Origen considered this to be an interpolation. Modern translations omit "And the Lord said".

LK(24:12):

KJV: Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

GNB, RBV, RIV: also have this verse

TJB: and saw the binding cloths but nothing else.

NEB: Omits it

NWT: gives it in double parenthesis meaning "possibly later interpolation".

NO ASCENCION!

LK(24:51): And it came to pass, while he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts do not have: "and carried up into heaven".

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY(JN 7:53-8:11)

This story is included in KJV ... but now generally considered to be a later interpolation. The story raises the question that Jesus having passed the judgment ought to have acted accordingly. Or was Jesus too a sinful man?

DOUBLE DOUBT

JN(Ch.21)

COMMENT: According to TJB this last Chapter of John's gospel was "Added either by the evangelist or by a disciple of his". The authenticity remains highly doubtful.

FALSE WITNESS

1 JN(5:7-8):

KJV For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.

NIV: for there are three that testify: the spirit, the water and the blood: and the three are in agreement.(Footnote: the remaining not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century).

According to the research by the famous scientist Sir Isaac Newton the interpolation was probably made in Spain. Most modern translation now give the briefer version.

WEATHER FORECAST

MT(16:2-3): He [Jesus] answered and said unto them, when it is evening ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times.

GNB(Footnote): "Some manuscripts do not have the words of Jesus in verses 2 and 3.

FREE HAND

MK(7:16): If anyman have ears to hear, let him hear.

MK(9:44,46): Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Many modern translations, e.g., GNB, NEB consider these as interpolations and omit these verses.

Mk(10:7): For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.

GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts do not have "and cleave to his wife".

LK(1:46): And Mary said

NEB(Footnote): "So the majority of witnesses; some read Elizabeth; the original may have had no name".

LK(7:11): And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain(KJV).

NEB: Afterwards Jesus went to a town called Nain.

GNB: Soon afterwards ...(Footnote: some manuscripts have "The next day").

LK(8:43): And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.

Modern translations omit "which had spent all her living upon physicians".

LK(10:1-17): The Lord chose another seventy two men ... The seventy two men came back(GNB, NEB). KJV: Seventy

LK(9:55-56): But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the son of Man is not come to destroy men's life, but to save them. And they went to another village(KJV).

Modern translations omit "and said ... save them" as being a later interpolation.

EUCCHARIST

LK(22:17-20): And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

COMMENT: This forms the basis for the Christian Sacrament of Eucharist. This important pronouncement by Jesus is not included in the Peshitta version from "And he took ... in remembrance of me". According to GNB(footnote): "Some manuscripts do not have the words of Jesus after "This is my body" in verse 19, and all of verse 20.

BLOODY SWEAT

LK(22:43-44): And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts do not have verses 43-44.

UNFORGIVEN

LK(23:34): Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. and they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts do not have "Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do".

UNANNOUNCED

LK(24:36): And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts do not have "and saith unto them, Peace be unto you".

NO SHOW

LK(24:40): And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

GNB(Footnote): "Some manuscripts do not have Verse 40.

ASCENSION CONCOCTED

LK(24:51): And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts do not have "and carried up into heaven".

COMMENT: The very basis of "ascension" gone!

NO JUSTICE

Acts(24:6-8): Who also hath gone about to profane the temple, whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, Commanding his accusers to come unto thee; by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

Some modern translations omit "and would have judged .. commanding his accusers to come unto thee".

MISPLACED?

Rom(16:24): The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

GNB(Footnote): Some add this after verse 27.

Rom(16:25-27) GNB(Footnote): Some manuscripts have verses 25-27 and after 14-23 others have them only after 14:23, one has them after 15:33.

MK(16:9-20): Now when Jesus was risen early the first day ... and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Modern translations now admit that "Some manuscripts and ancient translations do not have this ending to the Gospels"(GNB). According to the FOOTNOTE in NEB: At this point some of the most ancient witnesses bring the book to a close; others continue with verses 9-20, as printed here, or in some cases expanded with additional matter; yet others insert here the paragraph(here printed below verse 20) and in one of them this is the conclusion of the book; in the remainder, verses 9-20 follow it". The additional paragraph reads as such:

"And they delivered all these instructions briefly to Peter and his companions. Afterwards Jesus himself sent out by them from east to west the sacred and imperishable message of eternal salvation".

Obviously, there has been a free for all attempts to "improve" the Gospels, the so-called "Word of God".

FREE FOR ALL

The following verses are included in KJV but omitted by many modern translations:

MT(6:15), MK(11:26): But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

MK(15:28): And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

LK(17:36): two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left.

LK(20:18), MT(21:44): And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

LK(23:17): (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the Feast). [Even KJV considers it as interpolation and places it within parenthesis],

LK(24:12): Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he held the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Acts(8:37): And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Acts(28:29): And when he had said these words the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

Heb(7:21): (For those priests ... after the order of Melchisedec).

The whole verse is given in parenthesis even in KJV acknowledging thereby that it was a later commentary(interpolation) by an unknown scribe. Such interpolations are not uncommon in the "Holy Scriptures".

MK(14:61-62): ... Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

MT(26:64): Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

COMMENT: This is a shining case of putting words into people's mouths. Firstly, it is unthinkable for the high priest to consider "the Christ" as anything but a human being. Secondly, for anyone who would not consider calling God by His name, and instead calls him "the Blessed", to even utter the word "Son" in relation to God is beyond comprehension. Thirdly, words have been put in Jesus' mouth which clearly smack of Pauline teaching about the Christ coming back to earth "on clouds of heaven"(See I Thess 4:16-17, II Thess 1:7-8)

MISQUOTES

BETHLEHEM

MT(2:6): And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not thou the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Mic(5:2): But thou Beth-lehem Ephratha, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.

COMMENT: Both these quotations are from KJV, the one from Matthew means that Bethlehem is not the least whereas the original from Micah emphasises that though it is little, yet ... The two mean quite differently.

PROPHECY POLLUTED

MK(1:2):

KJV: As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy face before thee.

All modern translations recognise that the version in the original text ascribes the(so-called) prophecy to Isaiah which is given as under:

Isa(40:1): the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The prophecy that Mark has entered in his Gospel is in fact a composite of Isa(40:1) and Mala(3:1). The latter 'prophecy' is as follows:

Mala(3:1): Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me.

Thus Mark was deliberately misquoting the 'prophecy' and translators of KJV realizing the composite nature of the 'prophecy' replaced 'Isaiah' by the word "prophets". Mark is not the only one who misquotes this "prophecy"; Matthew also follows in his footsteps and misquotes the 'prophecy' without checking its authenticity:

MT(11:10): "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee" ["The mistake may have risen because the Malachi quotation was added later, or possibly St. Mark took the texts already combined, from a testimony book, i.e. a collection of passages from the Old Testament put together by the early Church as throwing light on the life and work of Christ(D.E. Nineham: St. Mark, pp. 60)].

PRECAUTION ADVISED

MK(9:42), MT(18:6): Whoso shall offend of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. [PUNISHMENT]

LK(17:2): It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. [PRECAUTION].

DUPLICATION

MT(23:8): But be not ye called Rabbi[English:Master]: for one is your Master, even Christ.

MT(23:10): Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ.

OUT OF EGYPT

MT(2:14-15): When he arose he took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.

LK(2:39): And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

COMMENT: The flight to Egypt is a fiction created by "Matthew", or whatever was his original name, to creat a "prophecy" out of an irrelevant verse "when Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt"(Hos 11:1).

ELEVEN PLUS OR MINUS ONE

I Cor(15:5): CUR, KJV, GNB, NAB, NIV, NWT, RBV, TJB, all report: "And he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." This would be patently wrong as Judas Iscariot is supposed to have committed suicide and in any case was not a witness to resurrection. So, NEB writes "Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the apostles". Thus an ambiguity is deliberately introduced.

WRONG IDENTITY

MT(14:3): For Herod laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias's sake, his brother Philip's wife. Thus Matthew seems to have received wrong "inspiration"!

COMMENT: Herod the Great was succeeded by his three sons, Herod Antipas who became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, Herod Philips who became tetrarch of Iturea and was a good ruler, and Herod Archelus ruler of Judaea who was deposed in 6 C.E. long before John's death. According to Jewish historian Josephus who wrote about those times. Herodia had been married to Herodius who was half-brother of Herod Antipas. Thus Herodia was not the wife of Herod Philip.'

WORLDLY WISE

1 Cor(2:9): As the scripture says, What no one ever saw or heard, what no one ever thought could happen, is the very thing God has prepared for those who love him(GNB).

Isa(64:4): No one has ever seen or heard of a God like you, who does such deeds who put their hope in him.

COMMENT: Paul is concerned with "things" while Isaiah is talking about God who does these things. The text from Old Testament has thus been corrupted by Paul.

A PRAYFUL DECEPTION

Ps(16:8-18): I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life. In thy presence is fullness of joy: At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Act(2:25-28): For David speaketh concerning him. I foresaw the Lord always before my face. For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, And my tongue was glad: Moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life: Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

COMMENT: Through subtle changes in the text of the Psalm, a supplication prayer, has been transformed into a fulfilment!

UNWARRANTED

Acts(15:15-17): To this agree the words of the prophets: as it is written after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

Amos(9:11-12): In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof: and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.

COMMENT: Unwarranted association with Jesus' return. Incidentally, instead of the raising of a new tabernacle, even the existing one was destroyed in the aftermath of the Jewish revolt!

EARFUL CORRUPTION

Heb(10:5-6): Wherefore when he cometh unto the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Ps(40:6): Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

COMMENT: Author of Hebrews(Paul ?) replaces "mine ears" by "a body" in order to support his doctrine. If God does not require sacrifice then why Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross for redemption of the sins of mankind?

MISINFORMED

Heb(9:19): for when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people ... the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

Ex(25:5): ... offerings of Oxen(Not of calves and goats!)

Ex(24:68): And Moses took ... the blood, and sprinkled on the altar people(Not on book, tabernacle, vessels!)

COMMENT: Where did the author of Hebrew(Paul ?) get his information ?.

DIVINE MISTAKE

I Tim(3:16):

KJV: And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

COMMENT: Modern translations use "He"(Jesus) instead of God.

UNBELIEVABLE

Ex(12:40): Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

MT(1:3-6): And Judas begat Phares ... begat Esrom ... begat Arm begat Amindah 1 ... begat Naason ... begat Salmon ... begat Boaz.(see Ruth 4:18-22).

COMMENT: thus between Judas and Boaz are only six generations which are said to have spanned over a period of 430 years in Egypt, 90 years of the wilderness, and the period covered by Joshua, Judges, as well as Ruth. UNBELIEVABLE! Lest it be argued that Matthew may have intentionally shortened the list, we may refer to MT(1:17) where he confirms that all the generations between Abraham to David are fourteen, Luke(3:31-33) also confirms the list given above.

LOST FOREVER

II Sam(7:12): I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels and I will establish his kingdom. he shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.

COMMENT: This is for David's progeny. Solomon did build the Temple but the kingdom did not last "forever"! This does not apply to Jesus for it will then be expected that Jesus was at least expected to commit iniquity and be punished for it while Christians believe that he had a sinless nature(Heb 1:5-6).

NOT FULFILLED

II Sam(17:10): I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; and neither shalt the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before times.

COMMENT: Yet Jews have been uprooted many a times ever since!

FATAL PEACE

II Kg(23:20): Josiah would die in peace.

II Kg(23:29): Josiah died in battle.

VICTORY LOST

Eze(26:7-14): Behold I will bring upon Tyre Nebuchadnezzar, a king of kings ... he shall slay with sword...when he shall enter into thy gates.

FACT: Inspite of thirteen years of seige Tyre(Tyrus) did not fall! therefore conquest to Egypt was prophesied instead:

Eze(29:18-20): Nebuchadnezzar ... caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus ... yet he had no wages, nor his army ... therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will give the land of Egypt into Nebuchadnezzar ... and it shall be the wages for his army ... I have given him the land of Egypt.

Eze(30:5-26): Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword ... they that uphold Egypt shall fall ... and I will make Pharoa desolate ... set fire in Zoan ... execute judgement in No ... sin shall have great pain and of Pibeseth shall fall by sword ... Tehaphnehes ... shall be darkened ... I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the countries.

FACT: History does not record these events!

SUFFERING SPIRIT

Acts(16:7):

KJV: The spirit suffered them not

GNB: The spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

COMMENT: Most ancient manuscripts have "Spirit of Jesus" but in KJV it is given as "Spirit" which means Holy Spirit.

MADE UP PROPHECY

MT(2:23): So what the prophets had said came true. "He will be called a Nazarene".

COMMENT: This so-called prophecy does not occur in any of the books of the Old Testament. Apparently Matthew made it up to establish Jesus' Nazareth connection.

Or, it is possible that the subject prophecy was present in some book which may have been available in Matthew's time but was destroyed later on. In both cases, the correctness of the Gospel of Matthew or the completeness of the Old Testament comes under doubt.

EAT DRINK AND BE MERRY

1 Cor(10:25-26,28):

KJV: Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake. For the earth is the Lord's and fulness thereof ... But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake: for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.

COMMENT: It is now generally accepted that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" at the end of verse 28 is not only irrelevant but also a later addition. Most modern translation therefore omit it.

A MATTER OF HEART

MT(12:35): KJV: A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

COMMENTS: Most modern translators agree that the words "of the heart" are later interpolation.

COPY CATS

There are several passages in the Old Testament where the text is same or almost the same in two different books, e.g.:

Jdg(19:22-24) repeats the story of Lot and a false report starts a war!

I Kg 8 and II Chr 6 are mostly the same.

II Kg 19 and Isa 37 are exactly the same except for slight difference in numbering of verses which in any case is a later exercise.

This is considered due to later compilation from different manuscripts. Thus human hands(and minds) have played havoc with the "inspired" works.

SUPERSTITION GALORE

LEGEND

Ps(89:10)(GNB): You crushed the monster Rahab and killed it.(Footnote: Rahab, a legendary sea-monster; Footnote to Isa 51:9, which represented the forces of chaos and evil, and was sometimes a symbol of Egypt).

COMMENT: An inspired work containing legends and myths!

UNCLEAR VERSIONS

Iob(38:36):

GNB: Who tells the ibis when the Nile will flood, or who tells the Cock that the rain will fall?(Footnote: Ibis, A bird in ancient Egypt that was believed to announce the flooding of river Nile; Verse 36 in Hebrew is unclear).

KJV: Who hath put wisdom in the inward path? or who hath given understanding to the heart?

NEB: Who put wisdom in depths of darkness and veiled understanding in secrecy.

NAS: Who put wisdom in the heart and gives the Cock its understanding? [Verse 36 is placed after Verse 40].

RSV: Who has put wisdom in the clouds or given understanding to the mists(Footnote: The meaning of Hebrew words unclear).

TJB: Who gave the ibis wisdom and endowed the cock with foreknowledge?(Footnote: Both birds credited with foresight; the ibis heralds the flooding of the Nile, the Cock announces the dawn).

TLB: Who gives intuition and instinct?(Footnote: Or, who has put wisdom in the inward parts, and given understanding to the mind?).

NWT: Who put wisdom in the cloud layers, Or who gave understanding to the sky phenomenon?

COMMENT: [Job quoting a pagan myth in this "inspired" work!]

LEGENDARY MONSTERS

Isa(27:1) (KJV): In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

CNB Footnote: Leviathan ... monster, "Legendary monsters which were symbols of the nations opposing Israel.

FEMALE DEMON

Isa(34:14)(GNB): Wild animals will roam there, and demons will call to each other. The night monster will come there looking for a place to rest.(Footnote. Night Monster, "A female demon, believed to live in desolate places).

GUARDING THE ALMIGHTY

Eze(9:3)(GNB Footnote): Winged creatures, "Animals with four wings and four faces, thought of as guarding God's throne and symbolizing God's majesty(Details given in Eze 1:5-12).

HARMFUL CLOTHES

Eze(44:19)(GNB): They are to put on their clothing in order to keep their sacred clothing from harming the people.(Footnote: It was believed that ordinary people would be harmed by touching something holy).

NEW TESTAMENT also carries many stories of demons, demoniacs, exorcism and the like.

PROPHECIES UNFULFILLED

Gen(8:21): And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Gen(9:1): And I shall establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the water of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

FACT: Earth has continued to experience floods, earthquakes, famine, wars and other afflictions.

SAFE HAVEN

II Sam(7:10): I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.

FACT: These words were spoken by the prophet Nathan in the time of king David. This is supposed to be the "Word of God". In actual fact the Jewish people were repeatedly conquered by other nations, uprooted and exiled.

NOT SO SAFE

Isa(45:17): But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without an end.

Zeph(3:15,16): The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy, the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not.

Zech(14:2): For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth in captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

COMMENT: In any case Jerusalem was totally destroyed by the Romans in 66 C.E. and has been conquered by many nations ever since.

MESSIAH AWAITED

Dan(9:25-26): Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after three score and two weeks shall Massiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolation are determined.

COMMENTS: The "prophecy" remains uncertain. There has been a free for all by many Christian sects who have used it for each its OWN interpretation. From the end of the exile in the first year of Cyrus to the coming of Jesus there were about 600 years which does not tally with "seven weeks" or "seven weeks and three score and two weeks", the latter being 483 days or 483 "prophetic" years if we consider a day to be actually meant as a YEAR!

Seven weeks:	7 weeks :	49 days	: 49 "Prophetic" years
Seven weeks:	7		
and			
Three score:	60	69 weeks : 483 days :	483 "Prophetic" years
and			
Two weeks :	2		

Dan(9:27): And he shall confirm the covenant with me for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolation.

COMMENT: the missionary period for Jesus also did not last "One week", even if we take seven days to mean seven years. In actual fact Jesus' missionary period is indicated to be about one year according to the synoptic Gospels and three years according to the Gospel of John.

YEARS OF EXILE

Jere(25:11): And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Jere(25:29): For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished in Babylon I will visit you.

FACT: The exile lasted 63 years NOT 70. It is also not known as to who really wrote the Book of Jeremiah and what authenticity it possesses..

THE HOPE LIVES ON

Dan(8:13-14): How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation? ... unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

FACT: Two thousand three hundred days is equal to six years and about three and one half months. The prophecy was not fulfilled in that period. Even if we take one Biblical day as one earth year as conjectured by Christian dogmatists this would be a period of 2300 years since Daniel's prophecy which was made more than five hundred years before Jesus and would refer to the nineteenth century C.E. [Irrespective of the authenticity of the book of Daniel itself].

Many Christian commentators consider that this indicates the second coming of Christ. On the basis of various proclamations issued by Persian kings different dates were estimated in the past as below:-

Cyrus	636 B.C.E. comes to 1764 C.E.
Darius	518 B.C.E. comes to 1782 C.E.
Ardeshar(to Ezar)	458 B.C.E. comes to 1843 C.E.
Ardeshar(to Nehemiah)	444 B.C.E. comes to 1856 C.E.

On all these dates there have been great excitements in the Christian world but the "prophecy" remained unfulfilled. The HOPE LIVES ON!

SLAVERY

Ex(21:2): If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

Ex(21:4): If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out by himself.

Ex(21:7): And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the men servants do.

Ex(21:20-21): And if a man smite his servant or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.

Col(3:22): Servants, obey in all things your masters ...

Letter to Philemon by Paul is regarding a run-away slave, who is advised to go back and his master is asked to accept him without punishment. Paul did not disapprove slavery.

POLYGAMY

Ex(21:10): If he take him another wife

Deut(21:15): If a man have two wives, one beloved and the other hated

Jdg(8:30): And Gideon had three score and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

COMMENT: It is well known that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon and many other prophets and patriarchs had many wives.

FOR JEWS ONLY

I Sam(25:32), I Kg(1:48), I Chr(16:36), II Chr 6:4, Ps(72:18) etc.: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.

I Kg(9:5): (to Solomon) I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever, as I promised to David thy father.

II(Kg(5:15): There is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.

I Chr(22:10): He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.

Rom(15:8): Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the father.

Rom(11:26): And so all Israel shall be saved as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

LK(1:33): He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever.

LK(19:11): He was nigh to Jerusalem and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

Act5(13:26): Men of Israel and you who worship our God(NEB).

Acts(13:17): The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people.

Acts(13:23): Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a saviour, Jesus.

Acts(28:29): It is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am in chains.

Acts(1:6): Lord, will thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

Rom(1:16): It is the power of God unto salvation in every one that believeth; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek.

Rom(2:9-10): Tribulations and anguish upon every soul of man that death avail, of the Jews first, and also of the Gentile: But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to them Jews first, and also to the Gentile.

Rom(3:1-2): What advantage then hath the Jew? chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God.

FELLOW JEWS

Acts(2:14): At the time of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles they started talking in "tongues". Then Peter addressed the people(GNB): "Fellow Jews".

Rom(16:7,8): Greetings also to Andronicus and Junias, fellow Jews Greetings to herodion, a fellow Jew

NO GENTILES PLEASE

MT(10:5-6): These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

COMMENT: Interestingly, Luke, who is himself supposed to be a Gentile and was writing for the benefit of the Gentiles, omits this anti-Gentile anti-Samaritan injunction. According to him: "then he called his twelve disciple together, and gave them authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick"(LK 9:1-2).

MT(15:24-26): I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ... It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs.

JN(17:9): I am not praying for the world but for those who thou hast given me.

MK(6:7-10): And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two ... In what place soever ye enter into a house there abide till ye depart from that place.

COMMENT: This, however, could not be those of unclean "Samaritans".

MT(19:28): Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'

COMMENT: Jesus seems to be concerned solely with the twelve tribes of Israel, not with the Gentiles. Interestingly, his audience at that moment included Judas Iscariot who is supposed to be a condemned person because he betrayed Jesus. Did Jesus talk prematurely without genuine knowledge?

Jas(1:1): James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.

COMMENT: The message only for the twelve tribes of Israel:

LK(8:52-53): ... and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem ... And they went to another village.

COMMENT: It would not have been proper for Jesus' disciples to go in a village of the Samaritans, since they considered them "unclean".

Acts(10:28): Jew is forbidden by his religion to visit or associate with a man of another race.

JN(4:27): And upon this came his disciples, and marveled that he talked with the woman; Yet no man said, what seekest thou? or why talkest thou with her?

COMMENT: It was considered odd that Jesus was even talking to an "unclean" Samaritan woman. However this was a social custom and not a religious requirement.

MT(18:15-17): If your brother commits sin ... if he will not listen even to the congregation, you must then treat him as you would treat a pagan or a tax-gatherer.

COMMENT: We cannot be sure if Jesus really said so, but if he did as Matthew confirms, then this reflects the contempt of Jesus the Jew for pagans, or the non-Jewish people.

Acts(11:2-3): And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest into men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

Rom(11:26): From Zion shall come the Deliverer: he shall remove wicked from Jacob.

SALVATION FOR THE JEWS ONLY

LK(19:19): Jesus said to him, This day is salvation come to this house forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

IN(4:22): Jesus says to her(the Samaritan woman:) salvation is of the Jews.

Rom(9:27): Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, though the number of the children of Israel be as sands of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.(This is a reference to Isa 10:22-23).

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUES/TEMPLE

MK(1:21): And they came into Capernaum: and straight way on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

MT(4:23): And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues.

LK(4:15-16): And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all ... and he came to Nazareth .. and as his custom was, he went into synagogues on the sabbath day.

LK(4:44): And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

MK(11:11-27): And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple ... And they came again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple ...

MT(21:12), LK(19:45): And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast all them that sold and bought in the temple.

LK(20:2): And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple...

IN(7:14): Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

IN(7:14): And early in the morning he came again into the temple ... and taught them.

IN(18:20): Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world: I even taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort: and in secret have I said nothing.

JESUS' LEGACY CONTINUED

Acts(2:36): Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Acts(2:46): And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple.

Acts(3:1): Now Peter and John went up together into the temples at the hour of prayer.

Acts(5:42): And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Acts(11:19): Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

Acts(13:15): And when they(Barnabas and Paul) were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

THE NEW TWIST

Acts(11:26): the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Acts(13:45-46): the Jews ... spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said. It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life, we turn to the Gentiles.

Rom(11:7): Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for.

GENTILE DEFILE

MT(8:5-13,LK 7:1-10): relate the story of a centurion(KJV)/Roman Officer(GNB) who seeks Jesus' healing for his sick servant. Knowing that a Jew would be defiled if he entered a Gentile house he tells Jesus: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." In Luke's version he does not even come to see Jesus but sends "elders of the Jews" to him with an added message: "neither thought I myself worthy to come to you". Jesus, the Jew, therefore, does not go to the Gentile's house.

JESUS OF THE BIBLE

JESUS SCORNS HIS FAMILY

LK(2:48): His mother said unto him, Son, why had thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them. How-be-it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?

MT(12:48): Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

JN(2:4): Jesus saith unto her [his mother] Woman, what have I to do with thee?

A HEARTLESS SAVIOUR

MT(8:21-22): And another of his disciples said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.

On the contrary, when Elijah picked Elisha he even allowed him to say goodbye to his parents(1 Kg Ch.19).

JESUS CURSES PEOPLE

MT(16:3): Ye hypocrites

MT(16:4): A wicked and adulteress generation

MT(23:13, 14, 15, 23,27,29): Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites

MT(23:16): Woe unto you, ye blind guides

MT(23:17,19): Ye fools and blind

MT(23:24): Ye blind guides

MT(23:33): Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,

LK(10:15): Thou Ca-per-na-um which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell

LK(10:13): Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida

IESUS DENIES UNIVERSALITY OF HIS MESSAGES

MT(10:5-6): these twelve Jesus set forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

MT(15:22-26): And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried ... But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ... It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs.

THE WARRING MESSIAH

MT(10:34): Think not that I have come to bring peace on earth: I came not to bring peace but a sword.

LK(12:49): I am come to send fire on earth, and will I, if it be already kindled.

LK(19:27): but as of those enemies of mine who did not want me to be their king bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.

LK(22:36): He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

MK(9:42), MT(18:6): Whoso shall offend of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

MISSION COMPLETED?

IN(17:4): I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

MISSION OUTSTANDING

IN(16:7-13): For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come .. when he is come he will reprove the world of sin ... I have yet many things to say into you, but you cannot hear them now. Howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.

APPENDIX III

"THAT PROPHET LIKE MOSES"

THAT PROPHET

[JN(1:25): "And they asked him [John, the Baptist] and said unto him, why baptizest thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet".

Thus it is evident that the Jews were looking for either three different persons — second coming of Elias(P), birth of Christ, and the advent of "that prophet" — or there could perhaps be one person having all these three characteristics.

Zacharias(P) had a revelation before the birth of his son John(P) that he "shall go forth in the spirit and power of Elias"(LK 1:17). We are also told that Jesus(P) repeatedly declared that John(P) "is Elias"(MT 11:14), "Elias is indeed come"(MK 11:13), "Elias is already come"(MT 17:12). "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist"(MT 17:13).

About Jesus(P) we learn that John the Baptist(P) "bare witness to him"(JN 1:15) and "forbad him saying I have need to be baptized of thee"(MT 3:14). One person who heard John(P) speak said to his brother "we have found the Me-si-as, which is being interpreted, the Christ"(JN 2:40-41). Although John the Baptist(P) is said to have recognised Jesus(P) as "the Christ", yet he sent two of his disciples to ask him "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"(MT 11:13). In answer to this Jesus(P) only presents the evidence of his miracles and commits nothing. Did he then mean "Make your own judgment"? Does this mean that while Jesus(P) may or may not have been the Christ yet he was not "that prophet"? The picture is not clear and is further confounded when we learn that John(P) not just denied but "confessed that he was neither Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet"(JN 1:20-21). Jesus(P) himself makes things difficult for us: "whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straightly charged them and commanded them to tell no man that thing"(LK 9:20-21). It is discomfoting that while John(P) is(may be?) Elias and Jesus(P) is(may be?) Christ, both make no claim to these attributes. Even if they were to do that there is no claimant for "that prophet" which actually had to be from "among thy brethren", the Ishmaelites.

It is noteworthy that the Promised One had to be a prophet. Jesus(P) could either be a "prophet" or a Son of God, for he could not be both at the same time. As the Christians prefer to call him "Son of God" someone else must be "that prophet" otherwise the Prophecy is not fulfilled. "That Prophet" was to come to complete the divine guidance. And if Jesus(P) mission was to be completed by someone else(the Advocate), according to Jesus(P) himself, as reported in the New Testament, this another person, was yet to come: "And I will request the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you. But the helper, the holy spirit, will bring back to your minds all the things I told you"(JN 14:16-17). There is further testimony to the advent of "that Prophet" by Jesus(P) himself: "Nevertheless I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit I am going away. For if I do not go away, the helper will by no means come to you: but if I do go my way, I will send him to you. And when that one arrives he will give the world convincing evidence concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment. In the first place concerning sin because they are not exercising faith in me. Then concerning righteousness because I am going to the Father and you will behold me no longer. Then concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged. I have many things yet to

say to you, but you are not able to bear them at present. However, when that one arrives, the spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak of his own impulses, but what things he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things coming" (JN 16:7-13).

Thus, we find that:

- A. The mission of Jesus(P) was being left incomplete, or the world needed to know more than Jesus could tell them as Jesus had already told what he could (JN 15:15)
- B. The time was not ripe to bear new revelations as yet.
- C. There will be another, the spirit of truth (Arabic: AS- SADIQ).
- D. The prophet will not speak of his own impulse.

Muslims claim that it was Muhammad(B) who was "that Prophet". From his life we also see that Muhammad(B) was a most powerful prophet and he went "forth in the spirit and power of Elias". In the worldly sense Muhammad(B), also became the "King", the anointed one (Greek: Christos). Muhammad(B) who had always been known as As-SADIQ, even before he declared himself to be a prophet, declared that he had come to complete the divine plan for a universal religion in fulfilment of various prophecies.

Muhammad(B) always declared that he was only saying what had been revealed to him. Holy Quran, the revealed Book of Islam, also testifies to this: "Nor does he say (ought) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him" (AL-Quran 53:34). In all the Muslim literature there is always a very distinct differentiation between the "revealed", which is embodied in the Holy Quran, and any other sayings or acts of Muhammad(B) which are contained in separately compiled "Records of Tradition", or Hadith.

THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

Some of the prophecies contained in the GOSPEL OF BARNABAS regarding the advent of a great prophet are reproduced below:

- i. "After me shall come the Splendour of all the prophets and holy ones and shall shed light upon the darkness of all that the prophets have said, because he is the Messenger of God."
- ii. "Man, Jesus said, I am a voice that crieth through all Judea and crieth: "Prepare ye the way for the Messenger of the Lord", even as it is written in ESAIAS". This is a reference to Isa(40:3) which will be discussed later.
- iii. "Verily I say unto you, that every prophet when is come hath borne to one nation only the mark of the mercy of God. And so their words were not extended same to the people to which they were sent. But the Messenger of God, when he shall come, God shall give it to him as it were the seal of his hand, in so much that he shall carry salvation and mercy to all the nations of the world that shall receive his doctrine".

"LIKE MOSES"

The advent of this particular prophet had been foretold in the Old Testament as follows:

Deut(18:15,16): A prophet from your own midst, from your brothers, like me, is what Jehovah your God will raise up for you, to him You people should listen. A prophet I shall raise

up for them from the midst of of their brothers, like you, and I shall indeed put my words to his mouth and he will certainly speak to them all that I shall command him.

COMMENT: The prophecy about the coming forth of a prophet gives us several characteristics of that prophet and we find that Muhammad(B), the prophet of Islam meets these requirements more than Jesus(P):

- 1) He will be from "their brothers" and not from among the Israelites. Muhammad(B) is the only person from among their "brothers", Ishmaelites, to have made a claim to the final prophethood.
- 2) He will be "like you" i.e. like Moses(P). On comparison we find that in the matter of likeness Muhammad(B) is, rather than Jesus(P), more like Moses(P)

MUHAMMAD(B) LIKE MOSES(P)	JESUS(P)
1. Had a human father and a mother.	Is said to have had no human father.
2. Had natural birth.	Is said to have been born of a miracle.
3. Married and begat children.	No marriage, no children.
4. Accepted as a prophet by his own people during his lifetime.	Rejected by Israelites who are said to have forced the Roman Governor to crucify him.
5. Led his people out of a tyrinical system to establish a new order during his own lifetime.	Did not have enough followers to establish any new order in his own lifetime.
6. Was triumphant over his enemies.	Was arrested and said to have been crucified by his enemies.
7. Became head of the state he established	Was only mocked at as "King of the Jews".
8. Brought new laws and new regulations.	"Law was given by Moses, but graces and truth came by Jesus Christ"(JN 1:7). Not until long after him were his followers known as Christians. Until then and indeed till long after, they preferred to be known as Jews.
9. Left a written record of his basic preachings arranged under his own guidance	The authenticity of the record of his preaching made by others long after him remains contestable.
10. Died a natural death	Is said to have died on the cross.
11. After his death his body lays buried in the ground.	After his "death" was supposed to have been "raised" and ascended to heaven and is stated to be sitting on the right hand of God.

If we were to give any credence to the Christian view that Jesus(P) was the Son of God then the prophecy does not concern him any way and "that prophet" had yet to come even after

Jesus(P). In other words the mission on which Jesus(P) had come to this earth would remain unfulfilled until the return of Jesus(P) which must await the arrival of "that prophet".

Thus logically the "PROPHET" of the prophecy is not Jesus(P) but more likely to be Muhammad(B). In any case neither the Jews nor the Christians consider Jesus(P) to be a "prophet".

It is sometimes stated that "thy brethren" does not necessarily mean the Ishmaelites and in support of this is quoted Deut(17:14,15). "When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.... I shall set a king over me, like as all the nations are about me. Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom Lord thy God will chose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a "stranger", over thee, which is not thy brother". This is not a prophecy by Moses himself as it is clearly written in the period of the Kings or thereafter. Secondly, these verses only distinguish between "thy brethren" and strangers, and Ishmaelites were no "strangers" to the Israelites. Thirdly, the matter being mentioned concerned the worldly "king" for the tribes of Israel. In the matter of a spiritual "prophet" who was to be for the brotherhood of all mankind and not confined to the Israelites "thy brethren" would need to be understood in a much broader sense and for the Israelites the nearest brethren to them in that context would be the Ishmaelites. It may also be pointed out that "your brethren" is also used for other than Israelites in Deut(2:4,8; 23:7) where it refers to the children of Essau, also the same in Obadiah and Amos:

Oba(1:10): The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom ... For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee. [Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the elder brother of Jacob].

Amos(1:11): For three transgressions of Edom ... for he did pursue his brother with sword.

The Israelites and the children of Essau were "brethren" in the same manner as sons of Issac and sons of Ishmael. In fact when Isaac's sons Jacob and Essau(who was older to Jacob) were to be married Jacob was sent to Padan-aram to seek in marriage a daughter of Laban(in fact he married two of his daughters Leah as well as Rachel) who was brother to Rebecca, wife of Issac; while Essau married Ishmael's daughter Maha-lath(Gen Ch.28). Thus children of Ishmael, as well as of Essau, were no strangers to Israelites but were treated as their "brethren" as against Canaanites and other "strangers".

It is also noteworthy that the term "brethren" has also been used elsewhere to indicate all the children and grand-children of a common forefather, as in Gen(9:25): 'And he said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren'. The term brethren in this verse actually means children of his uncles Shem and Japeth who were brothers of Ham, the father of Canaan, and is supposed to exclude children of his own father Ham himself.

It is significant that in the Hebrew Old Testament Deuteronomy(34:10) reads thus : "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face". The Samaritans claimed to possess the "Original" divine words and in their Pentateuch this verse therein is given thus: "And there will not arise a prophet in Israel unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face". The Samaritans believed in the coming of a TAHEB, a restorer of all things. This then reaffirms that the promised "That Prophet Like Moses" will not arise from among the Israelites but from their brethren whoever they may be.

THE COVENANT

The Jews had been claiming that YAHWEH God had a Covenant with the progeny of Isaac(P): "I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his

seed after him"(Gen 17:19). However, in this context some other aspects of God's covenant are overlooked:

Gen(12:2-3): I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed".

This promise by God was made to Abram(Abraham)(P) before he had any children:

Gen(17:2-10): I will make my covenant between me and thee, ... My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.... I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee... in their generation".

This promise was made after the birth of Ishmael(P) but before even Issac(P) had been born. The covenant was to be with all the many nations out of all the children of Abraham(P).

In case the covenant was only with the generations of Isaac(P), then it should also have been inherited by Essau and his children the Edomites. In fact Essau was older to Jacob(P) and was only cheated out of his inheritance right by Jacob(P)(Gen Ch. 27). Irrespective of this alleged deceitful act the covenant was not only for Jacob(P) but for all the seed of Isaac(P). If the covenant was to be limited to the eldest son then in case of Abraham's(P) sons the covenant should have passed only to Ishmael(P) and his generations, not Isaac's(P).

It is also said that Ishmael(P), being the son of a bondswoman, could not inherit the covenant. Gen(21:10):(Sarah) "said unto Abraham. Cast out the bondswoman and her son: for the son of this bondswoman shall not be heir with my Isaac"

However, this claim ignores what follows in the Bible itself: "The son of the bond-woman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed"(Gen 21:13). This assurance is made even after Issac(P) had been born(Gen 21:15-17). The traditional rights and privileges of the first born are not to be affected irrespective of the status of the mother. Hagar being a bond-woman does not affect Ishmael's(P) rights and status as the first-born. God's Word must have precedence over human words and deeds. Interestingly if Abraham(P) did not have any children then his inheritance would have gone to Eliezer the Syrian who was his slave and steward of his house(Gen 15:2-3).

It will also be recalled that out of the twelve tribes of Israel two of them Dan and Naphtali were descended from Bilhah, handmaid of Rachel, the second wife of Jacob. Also two other tribes Gad and Asher were descended from Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah, the first wife of Jacob who was also Rachel's elder sister. The Israelites make no exceptions to these four tribes on this account. Why should an exception be made in the case of Ishmael(P)?

We must also consider that if God's covenant was made only with his "chosen people", the children of Isaac(P) then this would follow that children of Essau were also entitled to that covenant which should not be limited only to the Israelites, the sons of Jacob who was Essau's younger brother. Even if Jacob(P) is stated to have cheated Essau out of his right of inheritance this does not eliminate Essau and his children from God's promise to Abraham(P) and(as stated in the Bible) to Isaac(P). We need to go back to the time of Noah(P) to learn that a Covenant had indeed been made with all the God's creation and should not be limited to the Israelites only as presumed by the Jews.

Gen(9:8-9,13): And God spoke unto Noah, and his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my Covenant with you [Noah] and with your seed after you, And with every creature that is with you ... I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

This is an everlasting covenant between the Created and His creation.

THE FRUITFUL TREE

Gen(49:10): The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

MT(15:13): Every plaut, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

MT(21:43): The kindgom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.

Isa(10:22-23), Rom(9:27): Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant will be saved.

MT(10:LK(3:9)): Every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and thrown into fire.

COMMENT: Now the sceptre shall depart from Judah and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Ever since Jesus(P) there has been no prophet amongst the Israelites. Muhammad(B) too has been the last proclaimed prophet among the Ishmaelites. The rise and spread of Islam has been phenomenal. It brought enlightenment to the Dark Ages of Europe and elsewhere. The world's youngest great religion has indeed been a fruitful tree.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

MK(12:1-9), MT(21:33-44), LK(20:9-19): There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruit of it. And the husbandmen took his servant, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants more than the first and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying they will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh what will he do unto those husbandmen? They said unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

MT(23:33-34): Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold ye I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.

COMMENT: The "son" now having been killed as claimed by the Christians, the vineyard will now be given to another husbandman.

THE PERFECT PROPHECY

I Cor(13:9-10): For we know in part, and we prophency in past. But when the perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

COMMENT: The only sustained claim to the perfection since Paul has been that of Islam.

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

LK(13:34-35): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem — Behold your house in left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Ps(118:26): Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.

Ex(6:3): And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known.

COMMENT: Once Jesus(p) had been captured he did not return to Jerusalem(whether he was crucified or not). If he did return after his alleged "ascension", he behaved like a fugitive meeting only his close disciples hidden from the public view. According to Christian belief he has yet to return.

According to the Muslim belief, during Muhammad's(B) heavenly visit[Mi-raj] he led a spiritual gathering of all the former prophets of the world at the Dome of the Rock where he was greeted as: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".

Every Muslim recites "In the name of Allah, the Benevalant and Merciful "as he proceeds to do anything. No other religious group makes this invocation so frequently.

Abraham(P), Isaac(p) and Jacob(P) indeed did not know God by the name JEHOVAH which is now known to be a misconception. They would have known him by his name ALLAH(or Elohim, or some other equivalent, if any). Even Jesus(P) called Eloi Eloi/Elai, Elai(MK 15:34; MT 27:46)

A PATCH OF UNSHRUNK CLOTH

MK(2:21): No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worst.

Jesus(P) was born, brought up and died as a Jew. His disciples and Apostles were all Jews. It is Paul who tagged his new-found paganistic dogmas on to Jesus'(P) message based on the ancient Jewish religion. The rent has been worse.

THE FRUITLESS VINE

IN(15:4-5): The branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in vine, I am the vine without me you can do nothing.

By dissociating itself with Jesus'(P) original teachings the Pauline Church created a vine that could not bear the fruit of Jesus'(P) holy vine.

NEW WINE, OLD BOTTLES

MK(2:22): No man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred.

Pauline theories have thus marred Jesus'(P) original teachings that we cannot sift the true from the interpolated. Truth must therefore be sought elsewhere.

MY PEOPLE

Hos(2:23,1:10), Rom(9:25-26): I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Deut(32:21)/Rom(10:19): I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Isa(65:1)/Rom(10:20): I was found of them that are my people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

COMMENT: Israelites (the "Chosen People"?) having been tried it was now the turn of the Ishmaelites to become heirs to the covenant.

THE NEW SONG

Isa(42:10-11): Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

Jesus(P) the last known prophet to the Israelites, having been rejected by his own nation, it was now the turn of their "brethren", the Ishmaelites, to fulfill the prophecy. The field is narrowed to the villages of Kedar: inhabited by none other than the generations of Ishmael through his son Kedar. A new prophet will now bring forth a new song! Those who are familiar with the recital of the Muslim holy book, QURAN, marvel at its poetic prose which sounds like a song.

The new song is once again about One God who has no partners: Thy Lord is one God and there is none beside Him.

VALLEY OF PARAN

Deut(33:2): (Moses told the Israelites) The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them, he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law.

This relates to an interesting sequence:

Sinai	Moses(P)
Seir(near Jerusalem)	Jesus(P)
Paran(modern Faran, the Valley of Mecca)	Muhammad(B)

TEN THOUSAND SAINTS

Jude(14): And Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of saints.

After Muhammad(B) was exiled from Mecca, he returned to that city victorious in the company of ten thousand believing followers! This is again referred to in the Song of Solomon(5:10) thus: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the cheiftest among ten thousand". Jesus(P) is not known to have had even a total of ten thousand disciples.

THREE SCORE VALIANT MEN

Song(3:7-8): "Behold his bed, which is Solomon's, threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords".

At the first battle fought against their oppressors from Mecca, there were sixty exiled men from Mecca by the side of Muhammad(B).

THE TOWN OF BA'CA

Pss(84:4-6): Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee, Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Ba'ca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pool.

Ba'ca is an ancient name of the town of Mecca wherein is located "the Ka'ba" considered by Muslims to be the first house of worship built by Abraham(P) and Ishmael(P). The miraculous well of water mentioned in Gen(21:19) in the wilderness of Paran(Gen 21:21) is also claimed to be the well of "Zam-Zam" located next to Ka'ba. The town of Mecca / Ba'ca is located in a great depression so that when it rains "it fills the pool".

THE REJECTED STONE

Ps(118:22-23), MT(21:42): The stone that the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

MT(21:44): Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

The reference to the stone is originally from Psalm 118 and can be variously interpreted. This "prophecy" was made by David at the height of the glory of Israel and when the Ishmaelites lay "rejected" by them. Israelites having had the benefit of many prophets with Ishmaelites in the background living in the wilderness of Paran, it was now the turn of the Ishmaelites to rise to glory under the banner of a new prophet springing from among them. History of the world has no parallel to the rapid expansion of the new religion and the power it wielded within shortest of time periods.

Another interpretation could be the "Black Stone", which forms the corner-stone of Ka'ba, apparently unfit to be an ordinary building block yet considered by Muslims to be holy and the most precious of any stone.

Interestingly, while the verse MT(21:44) is included in KJV it has been omitted in GNB as unauthentic. So much for the infallibility of the Holy Bible.

THE PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR ALL NATIONS

IN(4:21): Jesus said to the Samaritan woman "believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

COMMENT: Where else? Ever since the advent of Islam the largest body of worshipers gather at the Ka'ba in Mecca throughout the year! This is the house of prayer for all nations(Isa 56:7; Jere 7:11; MK 11:17).

Tob(13:11): Your light shall shine brightly to all the ends of the earth; many nations shall come to you from afar from all the corners of the earth to your holy name; they shall bring gifts in their hands for the King of Heaven.

COMMENT: Millions of Muslims from all corners of earth gather in Mecca for the annual pilgrimage of Haj, sacrificing lambs (and other animals) in thanksgiving in the tradition of Abraham(P) and Ishmael(P). Many more visit the sanctuary of the Ka'ba throughout the year. There is no other place on the earth so revered by any and all nations of the earth.

THE TIME IS COME

IN(4:23): But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshiper shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: for the father seeketh such to worship him.

COMMENT: The largest, continuous, mass worship goes on around Ka'ba in Mecca, year after year, week after week, every day of the week, every hour of the day, every minute of every hour. There is no similar worship anywhere.

THE BELOVED ONE

Song(5:16): His mouth is very sweet: yeah, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this my friend.

The original Aramaic word for "my beloved" is "MUHAMMADIN"! Mere coincidence?

The name Muhammad(B) was given to him by his paternal grandfather. Curiously, history does not record any person of that name prior to this. It is further interesting that Muhammad's(B) mother gave him the name Ahmad which too is not available in Arabic tradition before that. These unique names given under divine guidance must mean something. The root for both Muhammad and Ahmad is the same — "humd" — "praised" or "beloved". Muhammad(B) was indeed the "beloved one" of Solomon's dreams.

MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

MK(1:2), MT(11:10): For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

LK(1:76): And thou child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way.

LK(7:27): Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before me.

While Mark and Matthew indicate that the messenger will "prepare thy way before thee", LK(1:76) also seems to imply this. This messenger is supposed to be John the Baptist(P) preparing the way for Jesus(P). LK(7:27) seems somewhat different as instead of "before thee" it becomes "before the face of the Lord". In LK(1:76) "the way" in some versions becomes "his way".

Then a contrast is drawn between John the Baptist(P) and Jesus(P) who describes him as "more than a prophet"(MT 11:9, LK 7:27). According to Jesus(P) "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist! Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"(MT 11:1, LK 7:28). Let us overlook that Jesus(P) himself is born of a woman and that makes John(P) greater than him. By a clever twist the evangelists try to belittle John(P) since least of the kingdom, of which Jesus(P) is the king, is greater than him. The misquotation of the actual words of Malachi is blatant.

Mal(3:1): Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold the same shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

According to Malachi the God of Hosts is the speaker and the believers are the people addressed, as can be readily seen in the words "whom ye are seeking ... whom ye desire". But the Gospels(Mark's mischief blindly followed by others?) have interpolated the text by effacing the personal pronoun of the first person singular, and inserted "before thee"(or "thy face" as in Hebrew) twice. The evangelists seem to have deliberately twisted the language to show that this angel or messenger was John the Baptist(P). The contrast between John(P) and Jesus(P) is left for Jesus(P) to make.

Let us now ask as to who is this "Messenger of the Covenant". Strangely no claim is made on behalf of either John(P) or Jesus(P). More than six hundred years later Muhammad(B) made this claim which has not been made and proved by any other person since then to date for fourteen hundred years.

According to the Muslim tradition, Muhammad(B) had a celestial journey(known as MIRAJ, or ascension) during which the angel Gabriel accompanied him to the highest heaven from where Muhammad(B) went to the seat of the glory of God. During this journey

Muhammad(B) is stated to have lead the congregation of all the past prophets, including Jesus(P), in a collective prayer at the "Rock" in Jerusalem.

THE PROPHET OF MIGRATION

Jesus(P) said: No prophet is honoured in his own country(LK 4:24; JN 4:44). Muhammad(B) too was persecuted and driven out of his own hometown of Mecca.

THE BRANCH FROM THE ROOTS

Isa(11:1): And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

Jesse was the name of David's(P) father(1 Sam 17:12). Thus the "rod" out of Jesse" could be David(P) or even Solomon(P). Jesse's roots came from Abraham(P). A branch from Jesse's roots would then be a branch from Abraham(P). Muhammad(B) must be that branch.

DAVID'S LORD, THE ROD OUT OF ZION

MK(12:35-37): And Jesus(P) answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David, therefore calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son?

MT(22:42-45): What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. he saith unto them, How then David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

LK(20:41-): And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies my footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?

Psa(110:1-2): The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies my footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

As stated by Jesus(P) himself, Christ was not to be the son of David(P) but his Lord. Since Jesus(P) is stated to be "son of David"(P) "then he is not David's(P) "Lord". David's(P) "Lord" would rule in the midst of his enemies. Such a description fits Muhammad(B) who was successful as the head of a religion based on God's promise to Abraham(P). His enemies were made his footstool. No other head of any other religion has ever had such demonstrated success. Muhammad(B) was truly the rod of God's strength.

THE UNLEARNED ONE

Isa(29:12): And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, read this I pray thee, and he saith, I am not learned.

According to the Muslim tradition, at the time of his first revelation Muhammad(B) was asked by the angel Gabriel to "Read in the name of thy God who is thy Creator". Muhammad(B) was known to be unlettered and said to Gabriel: "I am not learned".

"AFTER JOHN THE BAPTIST"

MK(1:7): There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

MT(3:11): He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

LK(3:16): One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

JN(1:27): He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Jesus(P) was John's(P) contemporary being only six month younger to him. So John(P) was referring to someone who was to come "after" him. Jesus(P) did not exhibit any signs of being "mighty". On the contrary he was hounded, beaten up and "crucified".

Muhammad(B) was not only a holy prophet whose message succeeded within his own lifetime, he became a mighty ruler of a large empire(yet remaining as humble as ever!) breaking pagan idols placed in the holy Ka'ba. He filled his followers with 'the Holy Spirit' and the fire of faith. Holy Spirit to the Muslims means purification of heart and soul by the Grace of God.

We wish to recollect that Jesus(P) baptism was in the manner of John the Baptist(P), with water unto repentance. Jesus(P) did not baptize with "Holy Ghost and fire". Even his apostles were baptizing only "in the name of Lord Jesus(P), for as yet he(the Holy Ghost) was fallen upon none of them"(Acts 8:16). When some of them were perceived to have received the Holy Ghost even then they were being "baptized in the name of the Lord"(Acts 10:47-48). The eunuch of Ethiopia too was baptized with water confessing only "that Jesus(P) Christ is the Son of God"(Acts 8:37-38).

Paul, who declares himself as "a servant of Jesus(P) Christ" talked little about the Holy Ghost/Holy Spirit. His doctrine of salvation was based on "Grace", yet he kept talking about salvation "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus(P) Christ our Lord"(Rom 5:21). His salutations in his epistles were always in the name of Jesus(P) Christ except in II Cor(13:14). "The grace of the Lord Jesus(P) Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." [Note: There is no "Father, Son and Holy Ghost". It is God, Christ, Holy Ghost i.e., neither the "SON" nor the Holy Ghost have any partnership with "God". This came later on].

THE LAST PROPHET

Prophethood did not end with Jesus(P). New Testament records many prophets. Even Paul keeps talking of prophets within his own new-found Church. Only Muhammad(B) declared that he was the "Last Prophet", that there will be no more of them since God's divine guidance had been finalised in the Holy Qur'an.

OUT OF HIS HOLY HABITATION

Zech(2:13): Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Jesus(P) was raised out of either backwood Nazareth or Bethlehem. Not the holy city of Jerusalem. Muhammad(B) was raised out of the holy city of Becca(Mecca).

THE BLESSED ONE

LK(13:35): Verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

When(If) Jesus(P) was resurrected, his own disciples did not welcome him. They were actually in grave doubt. The only other historical figure welcomed in the name of the Lord has been Muhammad(B). Every Muslim invokes "blessings and peace on him" on every occasion he utters his name. Muhammad(B) confirmed Jesus(P) prophethood. Neither Jews, nor Christians nor followers of any other religion except Islam consider Jesus(P) as a prophet.

THE ONE WHO STAMMERED

Isa(28:11): With stammering lips and another tongue, will he speak to this people.

Whenever a new revelation would come to Muhammad(B) he would be in a state of tension and would utter the words as if stammering. Incidentally, some have imagined that this may indicate an attack of epilepsy little realising that the powerful words uttered by Muhammad(B) as received by him through revelation could not be expected from someone under a fit of epilepsy.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

IN(14:26): The spirit of truth.... shall testify of me.

Outside of Christianity itself the only religion that testifies to the truth of Jesus(P) prophethood is the one preached by Muhammad(B) who himself was known as the Truthful One(Arabic: As-SADIQ) and the Trustworthy One(Arabic Al-AMIN) even before he proclaimed his own prophethood.

THE COMFORTER

IN(14:16, 26): And I will pray the Father, and he shall give another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.

IN(16:7,13,14): It is expedient for you that I go away for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you when he, the spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak himself: but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me.

From these verses it is clear that:

- i) Jesus(P) has to depart before the Comforter will come. Obviously if Holy Ghost was to be the Comforter then he(she? it?) was supposed to be already there because many persons before Jesus(P) had already received it. It is also said to have descended on Jesus(P) like a dove at his baptism. Besides, the way Jesus(P) described the Comforter would indicate a human being and not another "Person" of the "God-head".
- ii) The Comforter shall not speak of himself: which makes the Comforter subservient to someone. Even if this "someone" was to be God, or more precisely God the Father, then it makes the "Father" more powerful than the Holy Ghost, like it was for Jesus(P) himself. This would make "Father" the most superior, not co-equal, as in the Trinitarian God-head.

Muhammad(B) always stated that he was only a messenger of Allah. He claimed that he only spoke what he heard in revelation. As the Holy Qur'an states: "Nor doth he speak of [his own] desire. It is naught save an inspiration".

DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

Hos(2:7-9): And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, said the Lord of the hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

This prophecy does not even remotely concern Jesus(P) because as stated by Jesus(P) himself he did not come to bring peace but sword(MK 13, MT 24, LK 21) and did not glorify the temple but rather predicted its total destruction(MT 10:34), a prediction(was it?) that was eventually fulfilled in less than forty years after him. The original Hebrew words for "the desire" and "peace" are "Himda" and "Shlom". These words put in proper perspective point to the coming of Muhammad(B) and the establishment of the religion of Islam(peace: Shlom). The "latter house" at Ka'aba has had more "glory", that continues ever-increasing, than the "former house" which was only intermittently filled with glory and now stands destroyed.

When a son was born to an Arabian woman after her husband died. She named him Ahmad. That name curiously had never been given to any Arabian child. The Arabic literature of Jahilia(The period of ignorance, before Islam), does not contain that name. Muhammad(B) is indeed the prophet of peace(Shlom: Islam), praised(AHMAD) and desired by all nations.

THE RIDER OF CAMEL

Isa(21:6-7): "Thus hath the Lord said unto me. Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels: and he hearkened diligently with much heed.

Chariot of horsemen	Babylon(Isa 21:9)
Chariot of Asses	Jesus(P)
Chariot of Camels	Muhammad(B)

THE BURDEN UPON ARABIA

Isa(21:13-17): The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge. O ye travelling companies of Deda-nim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished, for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it.

Muhammad(B) was born in Mecca in the tribe of Quraish who had descended from Kedara son of Ishmael(P). After his declaration that he was ordained as a prophet the Quraish persecuted him and his followers. This continued for ten years until it was decided to eliminate Muhammad(B). On the night of the drawn swords Muhammad(B) quietly left Mecca for Medina where he was invited and welcome. Within a year the Quraish marched toward Medina and were met by Muhammad(B) and his handful of followers. Quraish the children of Kedar were squarely defeated at the battle of Badr. The prophecy was fulfilled literally.

MAGNIFICATION OF LAW

Isa(42:21): The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

According to Paul: "Christ ends the Law and brings righteousness"(Rom 10:4). Thus the Christ of the Christians is not the one who magnified the law; it had to be someone else. Ever since Jesus(P) in the last 20 centuries only one person, Muhammad(B), has brought magnification of the law bringing it to highest honour in the Holy Quran.

PROPHET OF THE NEW COVENANT

Ever since Jesus(P), Jews had lost the hope for the Messiah, Christians had "annulled the law", and there was no mighty prophet until Muhammad(B) appeared on the scene. Muhammad(B) not only confirmed the previous revelations, as the "Books" of the Word of God, but also established the New Covenant to which the House of Israel had lost the right. Muhammad(B) declared that there will be no more prophets. The prophecy had reached its Zenith. During the last fourteen centuries no prophet has indeed appeared to counter that declaration. Imposters have never made any mark and have always faded into oblivion.

THE PROPHET OF PEACE

Jere(28:9): The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the words of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord doth truly sent him.

MT(5:9): Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the Children of God.

Jesus(P) ministry was for preaching the kingdom of heaven "Peace on Earth" was to be the mission of some other prophet. Jesus(P) himself stated that he was not the one to bring peace but sword(MT 10:34). Muhammad(B) preached Islam(Peace)!

KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE

Gen(14:18-20): And Melchisedec king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and and he (Abraham) gave him tithes of all.

Heb(7:1-4): For this Melchisedec to who Abraham also gave a tenth part of all; first being interpretation King of righteousness, and also King of Salem, which is King of peace: without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Heb(7:9-12): And Levi also who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of law.

According to the author of the book of Hebrews Melchisedec may have been a fictional/notional figure — without father, without mother, without descent, — Malchisedec could perhaps "be Malko (King)–Zedec (Just)." No wonder he is called King of righteousness, King of peace — a priest-king. Jesus(P) was at best called a "Rabbi", was never a king He never brought any new "Law", for he died as a Jew venerating and following the the Law of Moses. Thus priesthood never changed with Jesus(P).

When a new law (The Holy Quran) was brought by Muhammad(B) the order is the priesthood changed from Aaron's. Muhammad(B) was a priest-king. No wonder Abraham(P) paid tithes to the King of Righteousness and Peace (ISLAM), who was still in his loins.

SEALED IN THE FOREHEADS

Rev(7:3): Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.

In their prayers the Muslims prostrate themselves touching their foreheads on the ground. Due to this act over long periods of time, their foreheads bear a mark, "the seal of submission". Muslims are the only people in the whole world in all times who carry such a mark on their foreheads.

PROMISED TO ABRAHAM

Gen(17:6): (God promised Abraham): "I will make thee exceeding fruitful and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee."

Although Jews claim that the Israelites became a great nation, history indeed belies this claim. For most part of their history the Jews have been living in wilderness and in diaspora, subject to other nations. Even in their hey-day of King David they were at best ruling over not a very big area and their kingdom was but shortlived. Many a times they were carried away in exile. God's promise has indeed been fulfilled in the progeny of Ishmael. The Muslims have ruled over empires of great expanse from Atlantic Coast of West Africa to the lands of India upto the Pacific Ocean in the East and Central Asia to the north.

MERCY TO ALL NATIONS

BARNABAS(43): Verily I say unto you, that every prophet when he is come hath borne to one nation only the mark of the mercy of God. And so their words were not extended save to that people to which they were sent. But the messenger of God, when he shall come, God shall give to him as it were the seal of his hand, inasmuch that he shall carry salvation and mercy to all the nations of the world that shall receive his doctrine.

Jesus(P) repeatedly declared that he had come only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"(MT 15:24). Of all the prophets none has been so positively proclaimed as "Mercy to All Nations" as the prophet of Islam.

The following article is adapted from the book "Muhammad in the Bible" by Prof. Abdul Ahad Dawud, former Bishop of Uramiah.

THE RELIGION OF PEACE

Jere(28:9): The prophet which prophesieth of peace [SHALOM], when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.

The Prophet Jeremiah is the only prophet before Christ who uses the word Shalom in the sense of a religion. He is the only prophet who uses this word with the object of setting or proving the veracity of a messenger of God. According to the Qur-anic revelation, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the prophets (peace be upon all of them) were Muslims, and professed Islam as their religion. The term "Islam" and its equivalents, "Shalom" and "Shlama," were known to the Jews and Christians of Mecca and Medina when Muhammad appeared to perfect and universalize the religion of Islam. A prophet who predicts "peace" as an abstract, vague and temporary condition cannot succeed in proving his identity thereby. In fact, the point of dispute, or rather the critical notional question, controverted by the two eminent prophets known to the court and the nation like Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jere 2:8), could not be solved and definitely settled by the affirmation of the one and the denial of the other, of the imminent catastrophe. To predict "peace" by Jeremiah when he had all the time been predicting the great national disaster — either by the submission of the King Sidaqia [Zedekiah] to the Chaldean sovereign or by his resistance — would not only involve his failure, not to talk of his being a success in proving his veracity, but also it would make him even ridiculous. For, in either case, his presumed "peace" would mean no peace at all. On the contrary, if the Jews resisted the Chaldean army, it meant a complete national ruin, and if they submitted, an unconditional servitude. It is evident, therefore, that Jeremiah uses the term "Shalom" in the sense of a tangible, concrete, and real religious system which Islam comprises. To make it more clear, we should attentively listen to the arguments of the two opponent prophets discussing and disputing the national question in the presence of a wicked king and his court of vile flatterers and depraved hypocrites. Jeremiah has at heart the cause of God and His religion of peace, and in the vital interests of the religion of peace, or Islam, he advises the wicked king and his courtiers to submit to the yoke of Babylon and serve the Chaldeans and live. For there was no other alternative open to them. They had abandoned the God of their forefathers, polluted His temple, mocked and reviled His prophets, and committed evil and treachery (1 Chr. 36, etc.). So God had delivered them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, and would not save them. For a true and sincere servant of God, the religion comes first and the nation after. It is the government and the nation — especially when they have forsaken God — that are to be sacrificed for the cause of religion, and not vice versa! The other Prophet of Gibeon, called Hananiah, sought to please his master the king; he was a courtier and favourite, rich and in splendour, whereas his antagonist was always languishing and starving in the prisons and dungeons. He cares not a fillip for the religion and the real welfare of the people. He is also a prophet, for so says the Book of Jeremiah, yet he is a villain, and has exchanged God for a depraved king! He prophesies in the name of the same God as does Jeremiah, and announces the return of the booty and the captives from Babylon in two years' time.

Now, from the above imperfect description of the prophets, which of the two would you qualify as the true servant of God and as the loyal defender of God's religion? Surely Jeremiah would at once attract your sympathy and choice. It is only the religion of Shalom, of Islam, that can testify to the character and the office of a true prophet, Imam, or any minister of God on earth. God is one, and His religion is one. There is no other religion in the world like Islam, which professes and defends this absolute unity of the Deity. He who, therefore, sacrifices every other interest, honour and love for the cause of this Holy Religion, he is undoubtedly the genuine prophet and the minister of God. But there is still one thing more worthy of our notice, and that thing is this. If the religion of Islam be not the standard and the measure by which to test the veracity of a prophet or minister of God, then there is no other criterion to answer that purpose. A miracle is not always a sufficient proof, for the sorcerers also work wonders. The fulfilment of a prophecy or prediction, too, is not in itself a sufficient proof; for just as one holy Spirit reveals a future event to a true prophet, so does sometimes an evil spirit the same to an imposter. Hence it is clear that the prophet who "prophesies concerning Shalom — Islam — as being the name of Faith and path of life, as soon as he receives a message from God he will be known to have been sent by Him. Such was the argument which Jeremiah had recourse to and with which he wished to convince his audience of the falsity of Hananiah. But the wicked king and his entourage would not listen to and obey the word of God.

As argued in the preceding paragraph, it should be noted that neither the fulfilment of a prediction nor the working of a miracle was enough to prove the genuine character of a prophet; that the loyalty and strict attachment to the religion is the best and the decisive proof for the purpose; that "Shalom" was used to express the religion of peace. Once again we repeat the same assertion that Shalom is no other than Islam. And we demand from those who would object to this interpretation to produce an Arabic word besides Islam and Salam as the equivalent of the Shalom, and also to find for us another word in Hebrew besides Shalom that would convey and express the same meaning as Islam. It is impossible to produce another such an equivalent. Therefore we are forced to admit that Shalom is the same as "salam" or "peace" in the abstract, and "Islam" as a religion and faith in the concrete.

As the Qur'an in chap.ii expressly reminds us that Abraham and his sons and grandsons were the followers of Islam; that they were neither Jews nor Christians; that they preached and propagated the worship and the faith in the one God to all the peoples among whom they sojourned or dwelt, we must admit that not only the Jews, but several other nations that descended from the other sons of Abraham and many tribes converted and absorbed by them, were also Muslims; that is to say, believers in Allah and resigned to His will. There were the people of Essau, the Edomites, the Midianites, and numerous other peoples living in Arabia, who knew God and worshipped Him like the Israelites. These peoples had also their own prophets and religious guides like Job, Jethro (the father-in-law of the Prophet Moses), Balaam, Hud, and many others. But they, like the Jews, had taken to idolatry until it was totally eradicated by the Prince of the prophets. The Jews, in about the fifth century B.C., produced the greater portion of their canonical books of the Old Testament, when the memories of the conquest of the land of Canaan by Joshua, the temple and Jerusalem of Solomon, were events buried in the past epochs of their wondrous history. A nationalistic and Judaistic spirit of solicitude and seclusion reigned among the small remnant of Israel; the belief in the coming of a great Saviour to restore the lost throne and crown of David was regnant, and the old meaning of "Shalom" as the name of the religion of Abraham and common to all the different peoples descended from him was no longer remembered. It is from this point of view that I regard this passage of Jeremiah as one of the golden texts in the Hebrew sacred writ.

THE VERDICT ON "THAT PROPHET"

Writers of the Gospels in New Testament have taken great pains to search for "messianic" passages in the Old Testament to prove that the birth, life and "death" of Jesus(P) was "according to the Scriptures". If the Scriptures really contain "prophecies" regarding the prophet who is to come then both the Jews and the Christians are still waiting for him, because Jews do not accept Jesus(P) to be the promised one and Christians too do not admit Jesus(P) to be a prophet anyway. By quoting Biblical "prophecies" (limiting ourselves to just a few for fear of unnecessarily prolonging the text in the present book) we have showed that the promised prophet could well be Muhammad(B) who was in the seed of Ishmael, from the valley of Paran, the desire of all nation, harbinger of peace(Shalom: Islam) on earth.

The above discussion is included only in the context of the Biblical prophecy which by itself may or may not be correct as many others of its kind in the Bible, the onus for correctness lying on those who profess the Bible to be truly, really, the word of God in its present form. As for Muhammad(B) his claim of prophethood stands independent of any Biblical prophecy. It is noteworthy that no prophet or major religion is known to have risen between Jesus(P) and Muhammad(B) and ever since. In fact Muhammad(B) also declared that there shall be no more prophets after him since the Divine message had been complete. No further need of any Paraclete. Now there shall be one shepherd for one true fold.

According to the eminent British historian Professor Philip K. Hitti(History of the Arabs): Muhammad(B) is "the only one out of all the prophets to have been born within the full light of history".

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APPENDIX IV

THE QURANIC VERSION

"Besides Christianity itself the only religion that recognises the holy character of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is Islam. In the holy book of Islam, Al-Quran, Jesus(P) has been given special mention and he is placed among the most venerated prophets of God. Holy Quran also forcefully defends Mary(Maryam)(P), mother of Jesus(P) against calumny and slander. The Quranic version about Jesus(P) provides an alternate view about the personality of Jesus(P). Some extracts from this glorious Book are given hereunder for the interest of the readers. No comments have been added. It may, however, be noted that the Holy Quran does not tell stories but emphasises morals. The reader is encouraged to read authoritative commentaries to have a deeper knowledge.

The Holy Quran is divided into Surahs (or Chapters), there being 114 of various lengths ranging from 3 verses to 286 verses. References are given so that the first number denotes the sequence number of the Surah and the second number is the serial number(s) of the verse(s) within that particular Surah. Thus, 3:45-47 would mean verses 45 to 47 in the 3rd Surah. The words in the square parenthesis "[]" are additions made by the translator for clearer understanding of the text.

ZACHARIAH AND JOHN

He said: My Lord! How can I have a son when age hath overtaken me already and my wife is barren? [The angel] answered: So (will it be). Allah doeth what He will(3:40).

A mention of the mercy of the Lord unto His servant Zachariah. When he cried unto his Lord a cry in secret, Saying: My Lord! Lo! the bones of me wax feeble and my head is shining with grey hair and I have never been humblest in prayer to Thee. My Lord. Lo! I fear kinsfolk after me, since my wife is barren. Oh, give me from Thy presence a successor who shall inherit of me and inherit [also] of the house of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, acceptable [unto Thee]. [It was said unto him]: O Zachariah! Lo! We bring thee tidings of a son whose name is Yahya [John the Baptist]; We have given the same name to none before [him]. He said: My Lord! How can I have a son when my wife is barren and I have reached infirm old age? He said: So [it will be]. Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me even as I created thee before when thou wast naught. (19:2-9).

MARY AND JESUS

And when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah hath chosen thee and made thee pure, and hath preferred thee above [all] the women of creation(3:42).

[And recall] when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near [unto Allah]. He will speak unto mankind in his cradle and in his manhood and he is of the righteous. She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me? He said: So [it will be]. Allah createth what he will. If He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is(3:45-47).

And God will teach him the Book of Wisdom, The Law and the Gospel, and (appoint him) an apostle to the children of Israel, (with the message): "I have come to you, with a sign

from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, at it were, the figure of a bird, and breath into it, and it becomes a bird of God's leave: and I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by God's leave, and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a sign for you if ye did believe(3:48-49).*

Lo! the likeness of Jesus with Allah is as the likeness of Adam. he created him of dust, then He said unto him: Be! and he is(3:59).

And mention Mary in the Scripture when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East, And had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from thee if thou art God-fearing. He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son. She said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste? He said: So [it will be]. Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me. And [it will be] that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained. And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten! Then [one] cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee, and shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee. So eat and drink and be consoled. And if thou meetest any mortal, say: Lo! I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any mortal. Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him. They said: O Mary! Thou hast come with an amazing thing. O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot. Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy? He spake: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a prophet, and hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive, and [hath made me] dutiful toward her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant, unblest. Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive! Such was Jesus, son of Mary: [this is] a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It befitteth not [the Majesty of] Allah that He should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is(19:16-35).

O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers and say not "Three"! Cease! [it is] better for you! Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that he should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender(4:171).

[Allah hath set a seal upon them] Because of their disbelief and of their speaking against Mary a tremendous calumny; And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger. They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them: and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah is ever Mighty, Wise(4:156-158).

*Those who tell Muslims your Book endorses our Books may note that some of the incidents and miracles associated with Jesus (Peace be upon him) as are mentioned in the Holy Quran are not included in the Canonical Gospels but from pseudepigrapha: Protevangelion, Gospel of Infancy, etc., which were long in the use of the Eastern and Coptic Churches.

They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah son of Mary. Say: Who then can do aught against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah son of Mary and his mother and everyone on earth? Allah's is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He createth what he will. And Allah is Able to do all things(5:17).

The Messiah son of Mary was no other than a messenger; messengers (the like of him) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat [earthly] food. See how we make the revelations clear for them, and see how they are turned away(5:75).

And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? he saith: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then Thou knowest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy Mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou, are the Knower of Things Hidden? I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, [saying]: Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things(5:116-117).

We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Apostles; We gave Jesus son of Mary clear (signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit. It is that whenever there comes to you an Apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? — Some ye called imposters, and others ye slay!(2:87).

PEOPLE OF THE SCRIPTURE

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered [unto Him] (3:64).

As We sent not(as Our messengers) before thee other than men whom We inspired. Ask the followers of the Remembrance if ye know not(16:43).

Therefore woe unto those who write the Scripture with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah', that they may purchase a small gain therewith. Woe unto them for that their hands have written, and woe to them for that they earn thereby(2:79).

They are not all alike. Of the People of the Scripture there is a staunch community who recite the revelations of Allah in the night season, falling prostrate(before Him). They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency, and vie one with another in good works. They are of the righteous. And whatever good they do, they will not be denied the mead thereof. Allah is aware of those who ward off evil(3:113-115).

Reville not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance. Thus unto every nation have We made their deed seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return, and He will tell them what they used to do.(6:109).

And Argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong, and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; Our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender(29:46).

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